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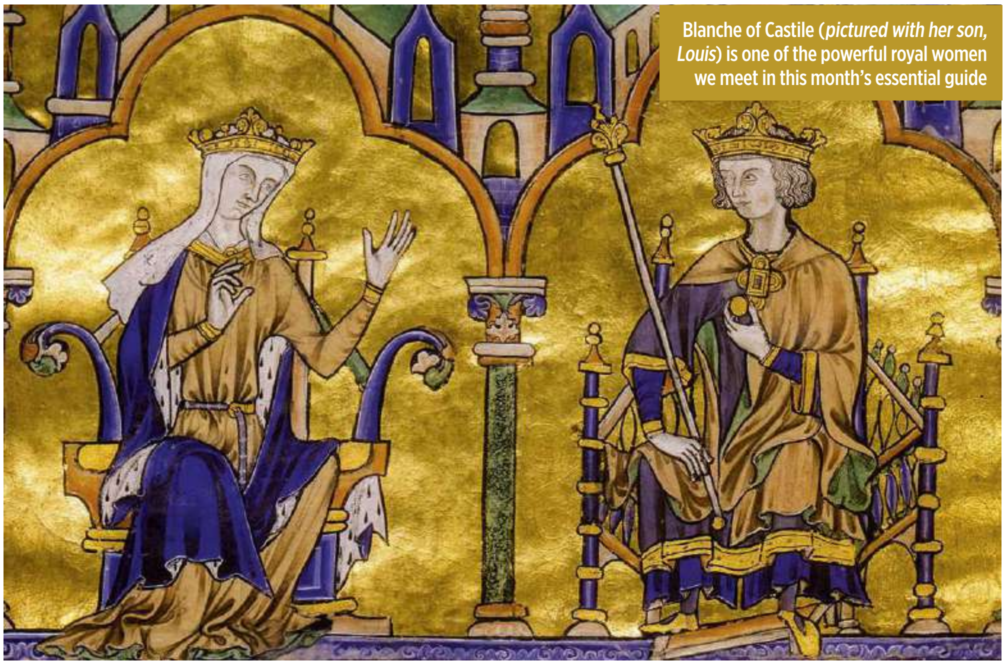
Blanche of Castile (*pictured with her son, Louis*) is one of the powerful royal women we meet in this month's essential guide

When we think of the key individuals of the Middle Ages, we might be forgiven for immediately turning to the well-known faces of Richard III, William the Conqueror, Henry V or Richard the Lionheart – men whose power and influence have been well recorded in both contemporary and modern sources. **But what about the women who stood beside them and whose roles – and lives – have so often been overlooked by past historians?**

In this month's essential guide, we've teamed up with Dr Elena Woodacre, an expert in medieval queenship at the University of Winchester, to explore women as leaders throughout the Middle Ages – as rulers in their own right, as mothers, wives and daughters, strong political and military figures, and patrons of religion and culture. Turn to page 26 to get started.

Elsewhere, we investigate **a Victorian crime as intriguing as any Sherlock Holmes detective novel** – a mystery that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle himself tried to solve, and one that can tell us a great deal about attitudes to race and justice in Edwardian England. Don your deerstalker hat and head to page 58 to read more.

We also explore how history might have been different **had the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 deteriorated into full-scale war** (*page 70*); chart John Cabot's epic journey to North America in 1497 (*page 16*); examine sculptor and painter Michelangelo's artistic genius (*page 62*); and look at **the impact of the infamous Corn Laws** of the 19th century (*page 21*).

Finally, don't forget to take advantage of **this month's great subscription offer,** which could see you receive a free book worth up to £30! The full details can be found on page 24.

Until next month, stay safe.

Charlotte Hodgman
Editor

Charlotte

THIS MONTH'S BIG NUMBERS

1m
The number of people believed to have died in Ireland during the famine of 1845–49

300
The number of figures that Michelangelo painted on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel

£1,313
The cost of the jewel-encrusted crown given to Joan of Navarre by her husband Henry IV

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USPS Identification Statement
BBC History Revealed (ISSN 2632-6930) (USPS 022-450) March 2021 is published 13 times a year (monthly, with a Christmas issue in December) by Immediate Media Bristol, LTD, Eagle House, Colston Avenue, Bristol, BS1 4ST, UK. Distributed in the US by NPS Media Group, 2 Corporate Drive, Suite 945, Shelton, CT 06484. Periodicals postage paid at Shelton, CT and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to BBC History Revealed, PO Box 2015, Langhorne, PA, 19047.

QUEENS ON THE COVER: MAIN - ELIZABETH WOODVILLE. BOTTOM (L-R) - MARGARET OF ANJOU, ELEANOR OF AQUITAINE, MATILDA OF FLANDERS, PHILIPPA OF HAINAULT. COVER IMAGES: GETTY X6, ALAMY X2, EXPRESS-AND-STAR X1

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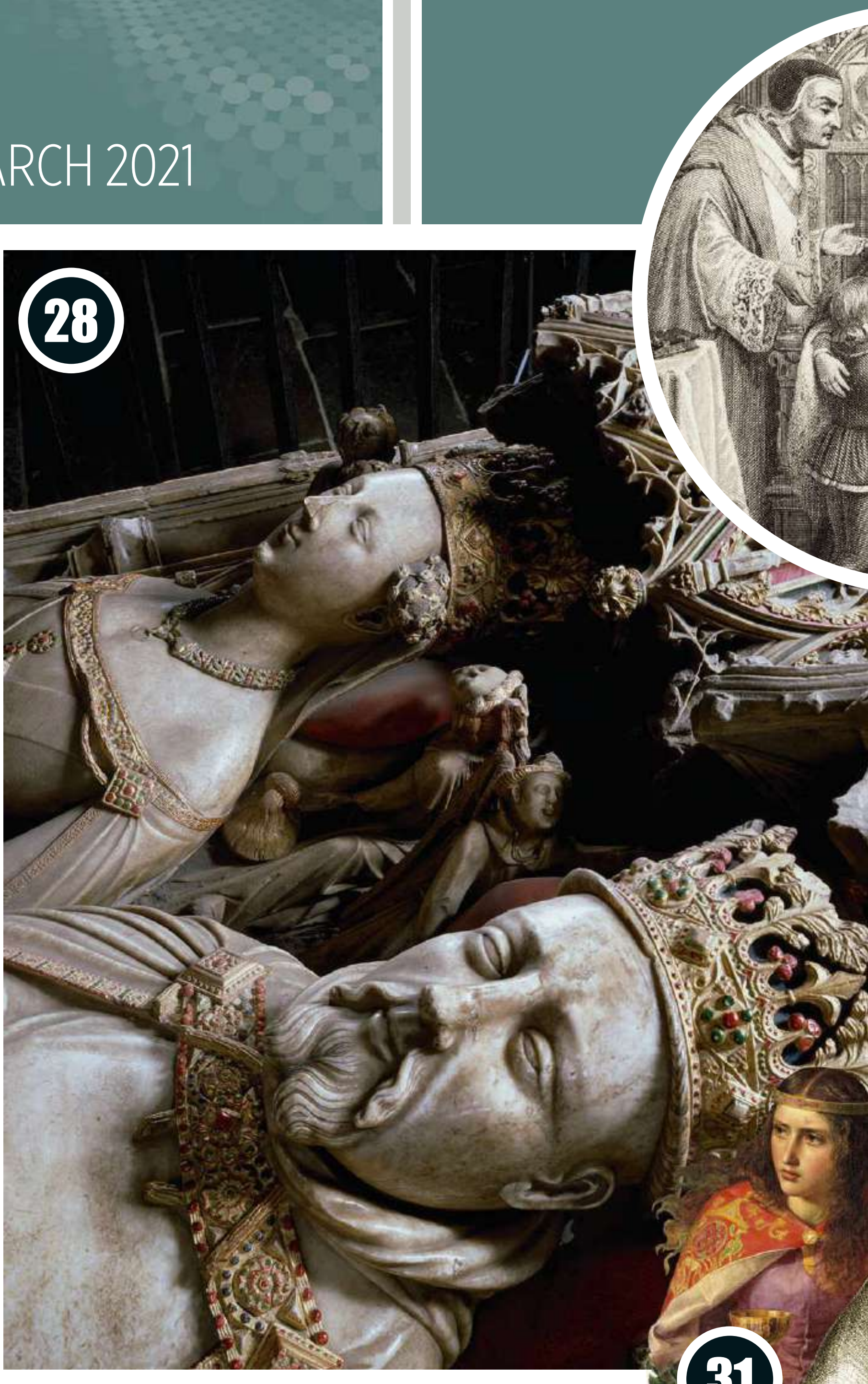

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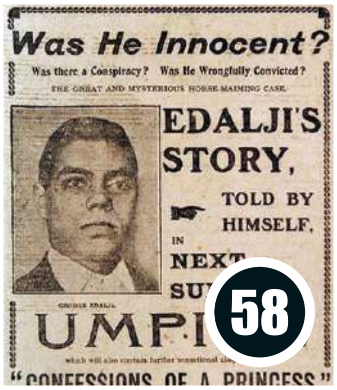
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THE GREAT AND MYSTERIOUS HORSE-MAIMING CASE.

EDALJI'S STORY,

TOLD BY HIMSELF,

IN NEXT

GEORGE EDALJI

"CONFESSIONS OF A PRINCESS."

▲ The story of the 'real-life Sherlock Holmes mystery'

▲ Delving inside the mind of a Renaissance genius

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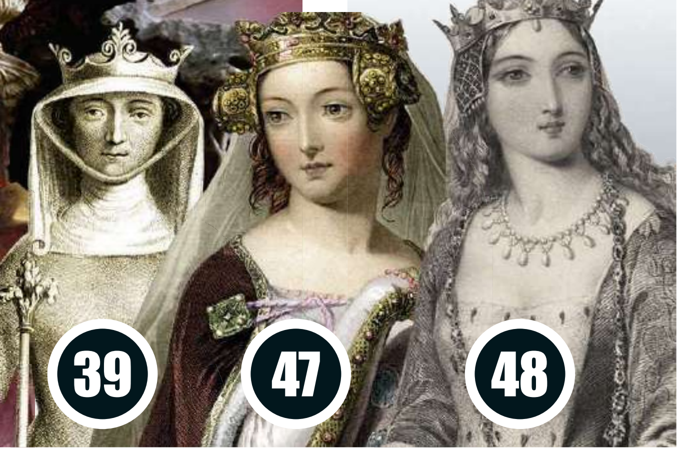

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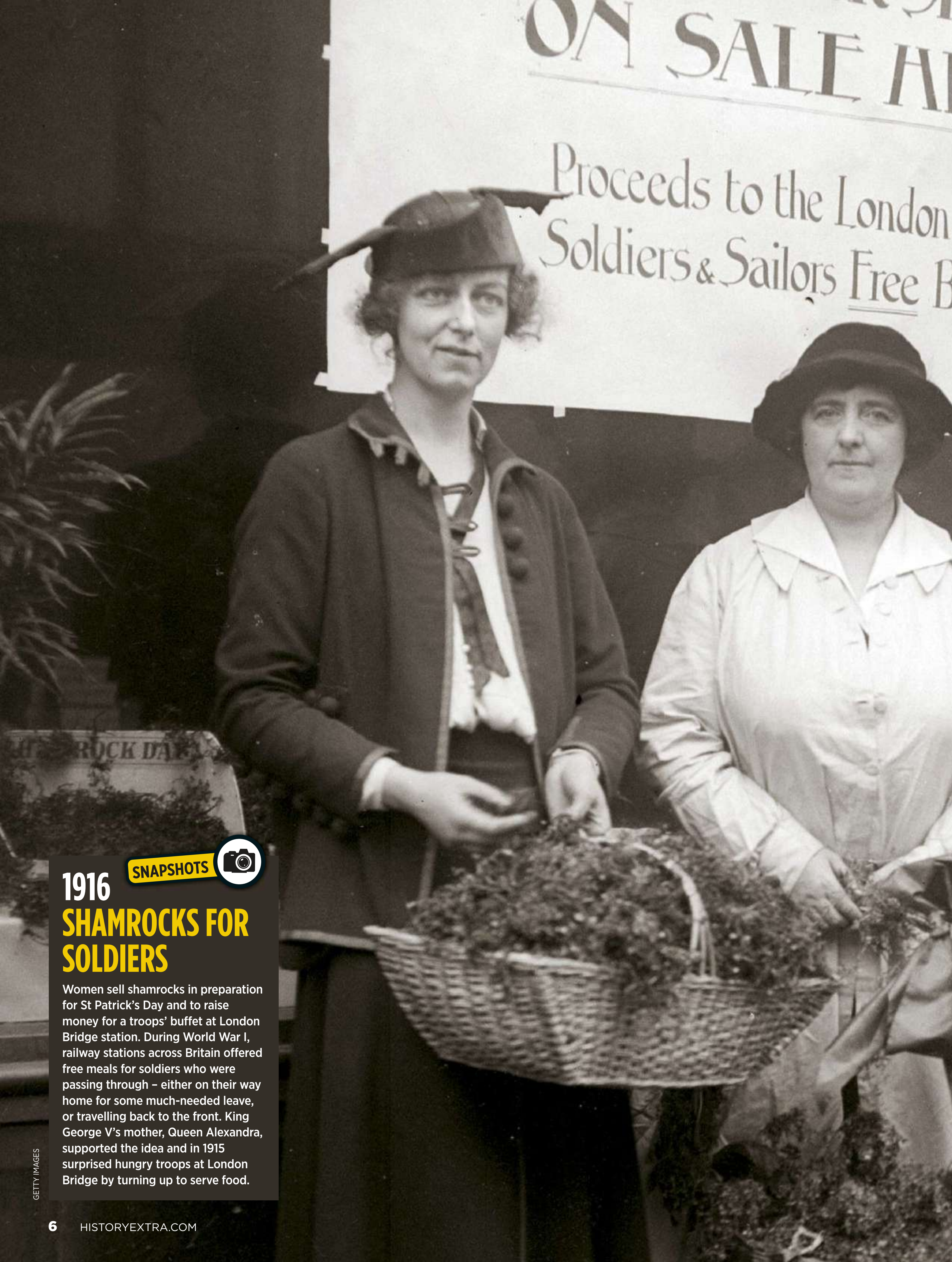
ON SALE A
Proceeds to the London
Soldiers & Sailors Free B
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SNAPSHOTS

1916

SHAMROCKS FOR SOLDIERS

Women sell shamrocks in preparation for St Patrick's Day and to raise money for a troops' buffet at London Bridge station. During World War I, railway stations across Britain offered free meals for soldiers who were passing through – either on their way home for some much-needed leave, or travelling back to the front. King George V's mother, Queen Alexandra, supported the idea and in 1915 surprised hungry troops at London Bridge by turning up to serve food.

GETTY IMAGES

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. W. WOOLWORTH CO.

SNAPSHOTS

1937
SILENT PROTEST

Employees of the Woolworth's store on West 14th Street, New York City, sleep on the floor while staging a sit-down strike in March 1937. Calling for higher wages, union recognition and a 40-hour week, the workers were inspired by the similar actions of Woolworth's employees in Detroit. The New York protest lasted 10 days, and was supported by many members of the public, who provided the strikers with bedding and food. The city's mayor, Fiorello LaGuardia, eventually intervened and forced the company to meet many of the demands.

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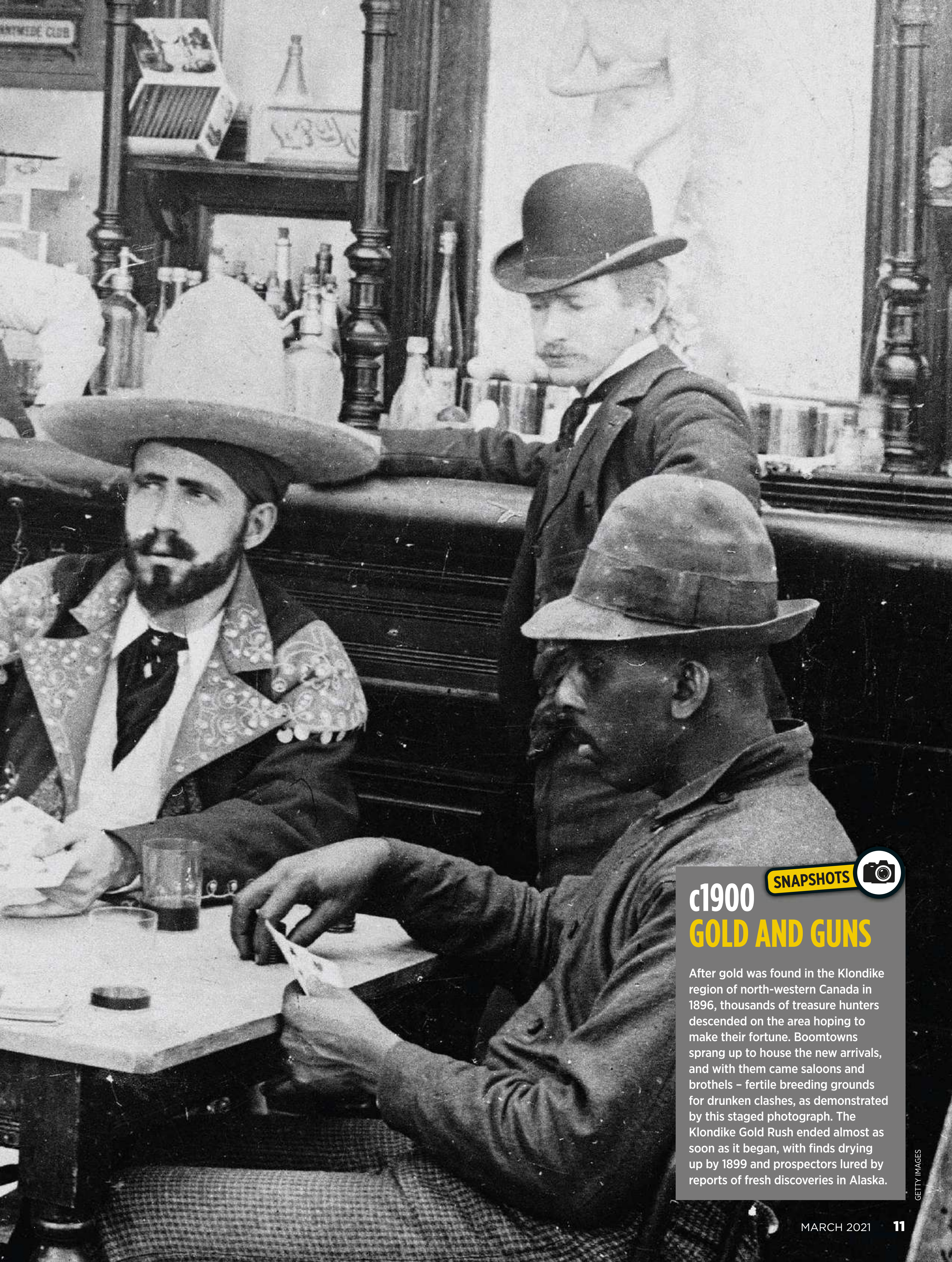


SNAPSHOTS

c1900

GOLD AND GUNS

After gold was found in the Klondike region of north-western Canada in 1896, thousands of treasure hunters descended on the area hoping to make their fortune. Boomtowns sprang up to house the new arrivals, and with them came saloons and brothels – fertile breeding grounds for drunken clashes, as demonstrated by this staged photograph. The Klondike Gold Rush ended almost as soon as it began, with finds drying up by 1899 and prospectors lured by reports of fresh discoveries in Alaska.

GETTY IMAGES

THINGS WE LEARNED THIS MONTH....

RECENT HISTORY HEADLINES THAT CAUGHT OUR EYE

BONES REVEAL DANGERS OF MEDIEVAL WORK

Injuries found on skeletons in Cambridge highlight the dangerous nature of manual labour in medieval England, say archaeologists. After examining remains from different burial sites across the city, University of Cambridge researchers found that 44 per cent of the skeletons exhumed from a poor parish graveyard bore evidence of fractures, compared to 32 per cent of those from the grounds of a wealthy friary, and 27 per cent from the site of a hospital for the infirm (*main image*). Injuries were also discovered to be twice as prevalent in men than women – likely sustained while carrying out farm work or crafts such as stonemasonry. More than 300 skeletons were X-rayed (*inset*), dating between the 10th and 14th centuries.

BOOK REVEALS DEVON'S TEXTILE HERITAGE

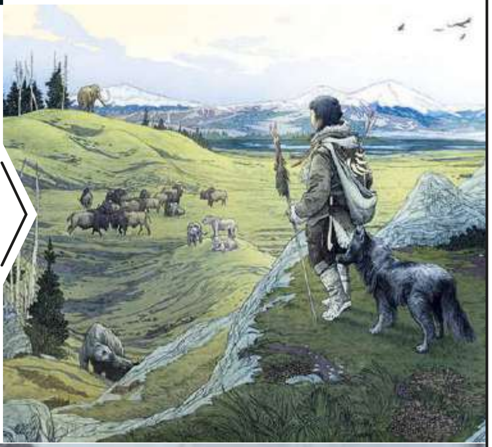
An 18th-century book of Devon fabric samples is being hailed as the county's "greatest archival discovery" in a generation. Rediscovered at the London Metropolitan Archives, the book contains 2,475 pieces of fabric collected by a Swiss-born merchant named Claude Passavant, when Devon textiles were in high demand across Europe. Primarily based in the city of Exeter, cloth-making was the county's single-biggest industry between the 14th and 19th centuries. According to historian Dr Catherine Rider, the colours of the fabrics have remained "vivid" despite their great age.

GARDEN FIND IS RARE ROMAN TREASURE

A seemingly unremarkable slab of marble dug up in a Hampshire back garden has been revealed to be an ancient Roman artefact. After using it as a makeshift mounting block at her stables, the marble's owner recently noticed the slab's laurel wreath pattern and asked an archaeologist to investigate its origins. Analysis found that it was likely carved in the second century AD in what is now Turkey. While it remains unclear how the artefact ended up in England, one theory is that it may have been obtained by a wealthy tourist on a 'Grand Tour' of Europe during the 17th or 18th centuries.

DOGS 'JOINED PREHISTORIC TRAVELLERS'

The first people to settle the Americas brought canine companions along with them, claims a new academic study. Following analysis of human and animal remains, researchers found that when the settlers began to arrive from Siberia more than 16,000 years ago, they came with hunting dogs domesticated around six millennia earlier. "We have long known that the first Americans must have possessed well-honed hunting skills," says the paper's co-author, David Meltzer. "The dogs that accompanied them may have been as much a part of their cultural repertoire as the stone tools they carried."

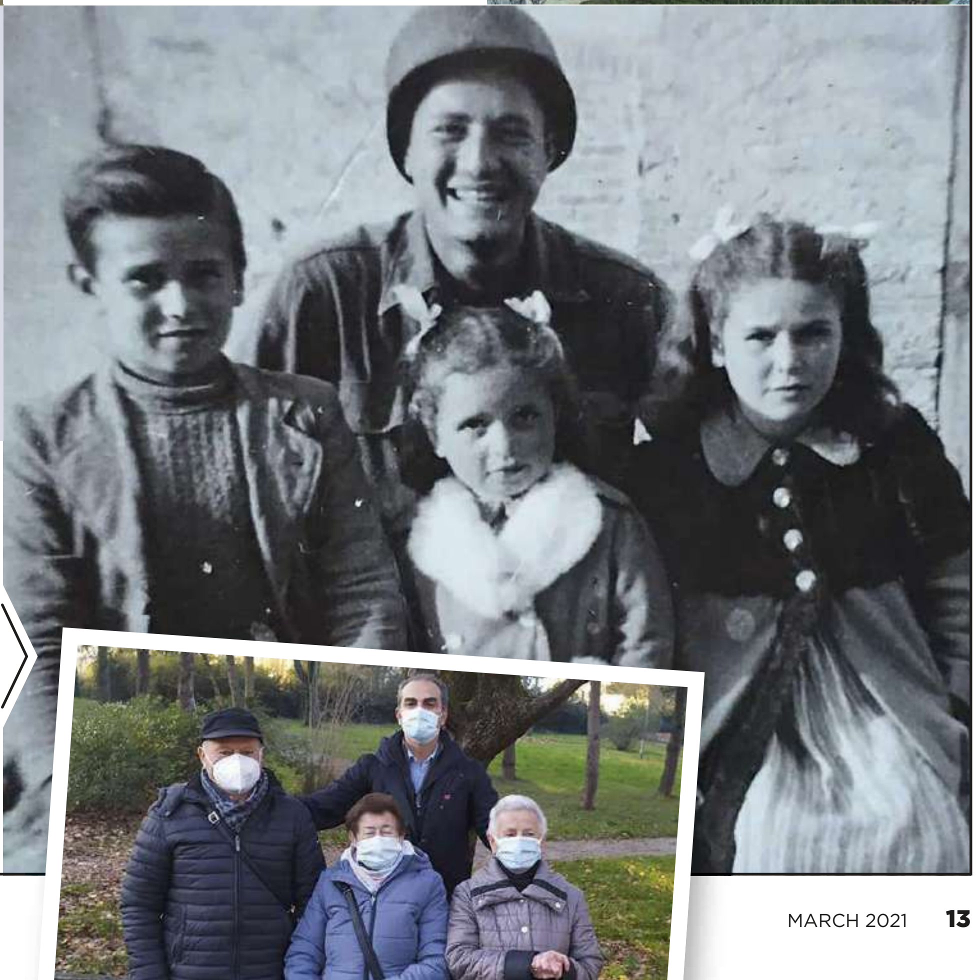


10

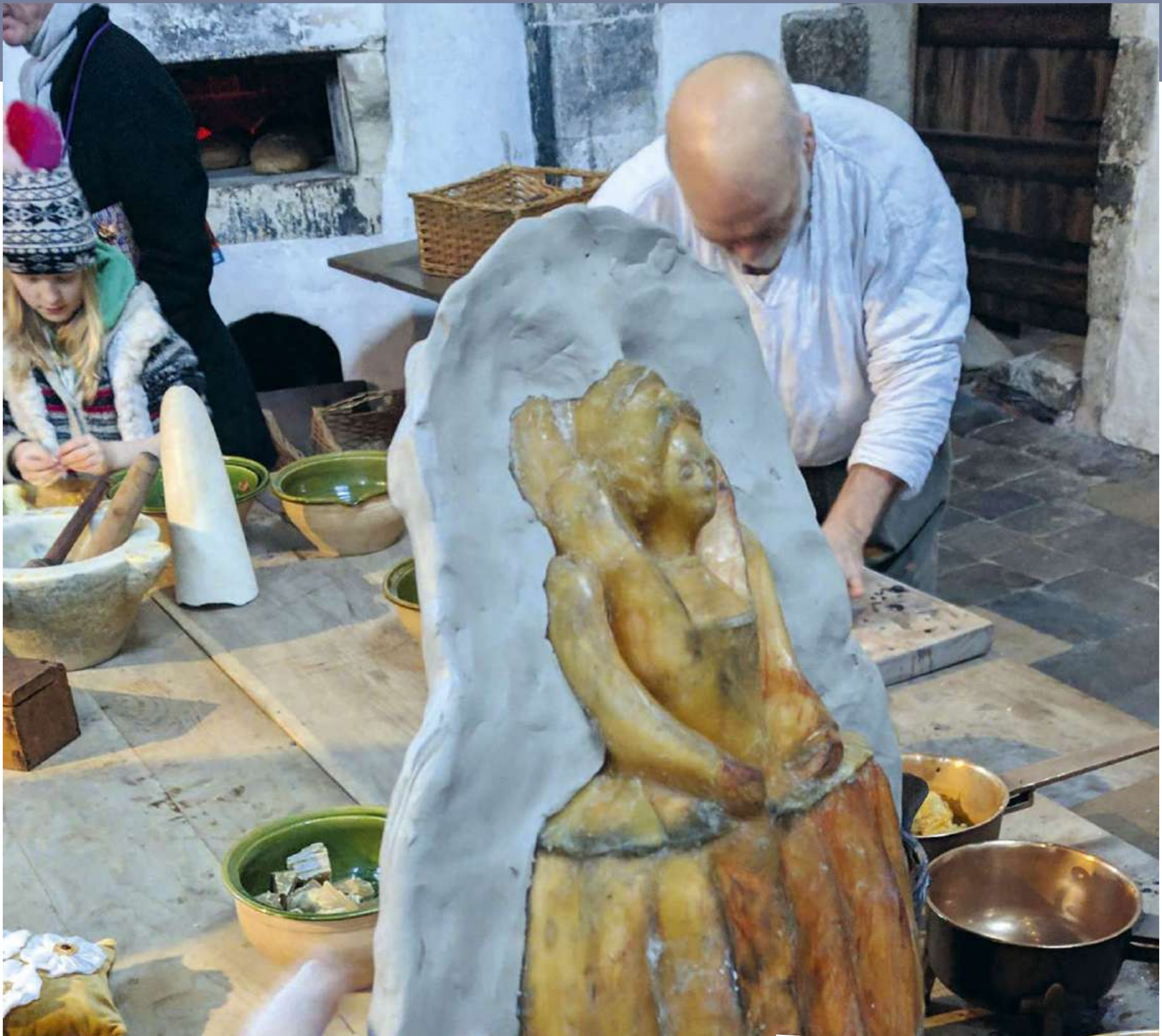
The number of 16th-century maps showing the Spanish Armada's route to England that will remain in the UK after the National Museum of the Royal Navy raised enough money to stop them being sold abroad

ONLINE APPEAL SPARKS WWII REUNION

A US World War II veteran has been reunited with three children he nearly shot by accident while serving in Italy. Following a successful web appeal, 96-year-old Martin Adler was able to enjoy a video call with Bruno, Mafalda and Giuliana Naldi, whom he discovered hiding inside a basket in Monterenzio in 1944. Having thought the children's noises were those of enemy troops, Adler raised his weapon, only for their mother to run into the room. The siblings also recreated a photograph they had taken with Adler, with journalist Matteo Incerti posing in the veteran's place (*shown right*).



DR JENNA DITTMAR X1, CAMBRIDGE ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT X1, LONDON METROPOLITAN ARCHIVE X1, WOOLEY & WALLIS X1, ETTORE MAZZA X1, MATTEO INCERTI X1



ABOVE: **A sugar model of Elizabeth I, sculpted by Richard's team**

RIGHT: **Henry VIII's Kitchens at Hampton Court Palace, alongside some Tudor-style pies known as 'chewetts'**

HISTORIC ROYAL PALACES X4

Historic Kitchens Manager at Historic Royal Palaces

Richard Fitch

HOW DID YOU GET INTO YOUR ROLE AS HISTORIC KITCHENS MANAGER?

Back in 1992 I was part of a group that provided historical interpretation for education sessions at museums. Some of the craftsmen within the group had made items the previous year for the newly reopened Henry VIII's Kitchens at Hampton Court Palace, and we were asked if we could help bring the rooms to life for the official press launch.

Then, in 1993, I was asked if I fancied being a Tudor cook at Hampton Court Palace for a larger, one-off Christmas event. It proved really popular with visitors, so gradually more and more cookery demonstrations were added to the schedule on an annual basis.

Over time, I moved on to researching the recipes and cooking methods that would have been employed by royal cooks of the past, and organising the palace's live cookery days. From there, it was a short step to heading up the whole Historic Kitchens Team, around five years ago. It's all been very much a case of being in the right place at the right time!

WHAT DOES YOUR ROLE ENTAIL?

I'm responsible for managing the team that provides cookery and food interpretation across all the sites cared for by Historic Royal Palaces – that covers just about everything from making Tudor pies at Hampton Court Palace to recreating the meals served to King George III in the Royal Kitchens at Kew.

As part of this, I oversee research into food and its history, as well as cookery techniques, tools (some of which are long forgotten, for good reason!) and all associated subjects. This research is then used to produce live cookery events for regular visitors, and education sessions for school groups.

WHAT ARE THE BEST AND WORST PARTS OF YOUR JOB?

The best thing about working with the history of food is that it links to so many other areas of the past, and provides a great insight into how our ancestors lived. That's ultimately what I see my job as – telling personal stories and showing that history was full of ordinary people, not just the great and the good. When visitors meet me or a member of my team in costume at one of the palaces, they're not meeting a king, but someone a bit like them. As fascinating as it may be to know what Henry VIII had for dinner, for me it becomes much more interesting when you can compare that to what an ordinary Tudor person would have eaten.

The worst thing about my job is that people presume I'm a 'foodie'. I'm not – I just happen to work with food. It's an excellent lens through which to view the past and a topic that enables people to easily engage with the stories we tell.

> "Choice was the key ingredient when it came to feeding the king – especially Henry VIII"

WHAT'S THE WEIRDEST HISTORIC FOOD YOU'VE COME ACROSS?

'Weird' is a loaded term as, in the main, none of the foods from past places or eras would have been considered weird to the people eating it. The past is no different from any foreign culture – they're full of things that might seem strange and peculiar to us because they aren't what 'we' do, even if they're perfectly normal to the people of that culture.

The real oddities in historic food tended to be specialities for people who had a lot of money. In that vein, something like the medieval cokentryce – half a pig and half a capon sewn together to create a mythical beast – fits the bill.

In my experience, the foods that many visitors actually find the oddest are actually the simple dishes that contain ingredients we wouldn't use today, such as recipes for bread from the 19th century that use mashed potato as a bulking ingredient.

WHAT WOULD HAVE BEEN ON A TYPICAL MENU FOR HENRY VIII?

Choice was the key ingredient when it came to feeding kings – especially Henry VIII. The sample menus we have for King Henry show that he was served two courses of 14 dishes for both dinner and supper each day. As well as beer, ale, wine and bread, he consumed roast beef, mutton, pheasants, venison pasties, fruits, fritters and custards.

In fact, having choice in your diet was often more of a luxury than the dishes themselves. This is clear when you look at the court menus for those at the bottom of the social scale, who were only provided with beef, mutton, beer and bread. Clearly, it was good to be a king! ⊙

RICHARD FITCH **oversees the Historic Kitchens Team across all six Historic Royal Palaces sites. Richard also researches, writes and holds talks at conferences about the history of food, with a special focus on the kitchens of Henry VIII.**

King Henry VII authorises John Cabot to explore unknown lands

Words: Rhiannon Davies

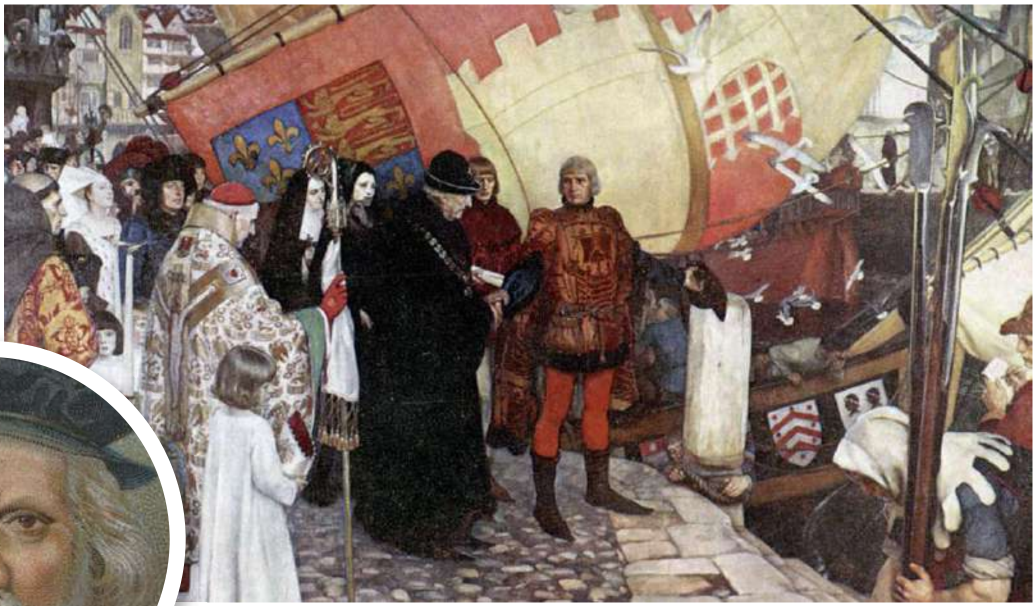
The Italian explorer John Cabot made history when he crossed the Atlantic and planted the English flag upon North American shores. He had sailed to a distant place where tall trees burst from rich, loamy soil, its waters so full of fish that the sailors hunted them by the barrel. But when Henry VII heard of Cabot's rich discoveries, the monarch felt a pang of disappointment: why were there no spices?

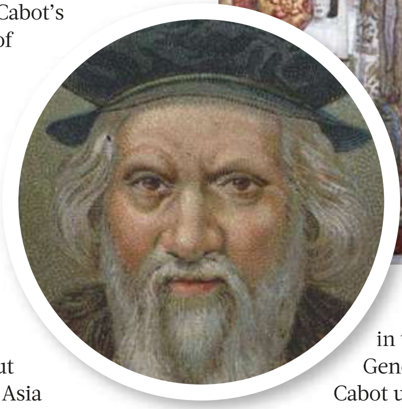
Henry had backed Cabot's venture in the hopes of securing a fast new trade route to China and Japan – both Cabot and the famous explorer Christopher Columbus believed sailing west from Europe would quickly take them to Asia, as Europeans did not yet know about America. At the time, Asia was thought to be overflowing with all manner of treasures, including precious stones, gold and spices. And, as England was still reeling from the ill-effects of the Wars of the Roses and outbreaks of plague, securing such a profitable route into the heart of Asia would see the country's prospects skyrocket.

ROYAL APPROVAL

Conversely, Cabot was not driven solely by the desire to fill his pockets with gold, but by his fervent ambition to travel the world and discover new lands. Born in the Italian city of Genoa in around 1450, Cabot upped sticks to Venice and became an official Venetian citizen in 1476. But he was determined to travel much further afield, and eventually found a job with a mercantile firm, where he learned how to navigate the sea with ease, and travelled as far as the Ottoman city of Mecca, an impressive trading hub where the eastern and western worlds collided.

Cabot's determination to sail to far-flung regions had also been stoked by reading Marco Polo's heady accounts of bustling Chinese cities. Cabot was desperate to see these places for himself, and he believed he could travel to them by charting a course west from Europe, across the Atlantic Ocean.





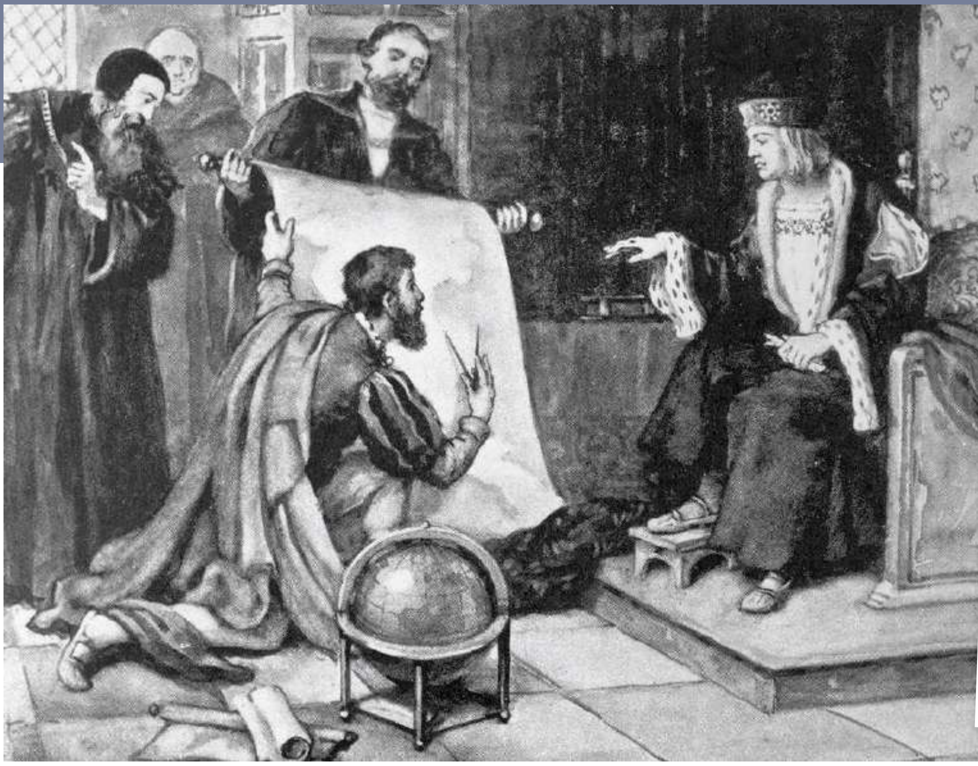
ABOVE: **John Cabot and his son, Sebastian, set sail from Bristol. Their first attempt at reaching 'Asia' in 1497 ended in disaster**

INSET: **A modern-day portrait of John Cabot, who is known in Italy as Giovanni Caboto**

GETTY IMAGES X4

However, Cabot lacked the money to finance such an extravagant operation, and at first, he failed to share his dream with those who had the funds to back him. Trying his luck at the European royal courts, Cabot eventually took himself and his family to England, to try and prise open the purse strings of merchants in London and Bristol. Before leaving for England, the aspiring adventurer learned that fellow Italian Christopher Columbus had travelled across the Atlantic and found land – land that everyone was convinced was the 'Spice Islands', or Indies.

Cabot reached England without



LEFT: **John Cabot kneels before Henry VII. The king sought one-fifth of the treasures from the explorer's travels**

RIGHT: **A replica of the *Matthew* was built to mark the 500th anniversary of Cabot's transatlantic voyage**

incident, and by the end of 1495 he and his family were settled in Bristol. Talk of Columbus's far-flung travels as an ambassador for Spain caught the attention of the English, and Cabot capitalised on this to access the coffers of some of Bristol's merchants. Yet a few months later, the Italian had the backing of a much greater patron.

In late 1495 or early 1496, Cabot visited London and met with Henry VII's advisors to explain his grand plans for charting a swift trade route to the far east. After persuading them of his idea, he proceeded to petition the king himself. Cabot won over Henry, too, and on 5 March 1496 the king sent letters patent to Cabot and his sons – Lewis, Sebastian and Sancio – which gave them permission to cross the seas in search of new lands.

In this document, Henry VII granted to Cabot and his offspring "full and free authority, faculty and power to sail to all parts, regions and coasts of the eastern, western and northern sea, under our banners, flags and ensigns". The Tudor king also granted the explorer the right "to find, discover and investigate whatsoever islands, countries, regions or provinces of heathens and infidels, in whatsoever part of the world placed, which before this time were unknown to all Christians". In other words, Cabot was not allowed to encroach upon land that had already been claimed by the Spanish or Portuguese – both Christian countries – as these nations had already sent explorers out in search of fresh territory.

The missive continued, giving Cabot and his descendants permission to "conquer, occupy and possess whatsoever such towns, castles, cities and islands by them thus discovered that they may be able to conquer, occupy and possess… acquiring for us the dominion, title and jurisdiction of the same towns, castles, cities, islands and mainlands discovered".

Through giving the Italian explorer this right, England would be able to acquire power over new settlements and perhaps start to seed its empire across the globe.

THE GREAT UNKNOWN

Ever the shrewd ruler, Henry made sure that as well as growing England's power abroad, he would benefit personally from Cabot's exploits too. The letter also stated: "As often as [Cabot and his sons] shall arrive at our port of Bristol… [they shall] pay to us, either in goods or money, the fifth part of the whole capital gained." So, although Henry himself had not put forward so much as a single gold crown to finance the venture, he would receive one-fifth of the treasures they brought back to England.

> "Cabot hired a crew of 18 men, including a barber to shave the crew's chins so that they kept up with fashions of the time"

To sweeten the deal, the king stipulated that Cabot and his family would be "free and exempt from all payment of customs" on all the goods they brought home from their travels. Moreover, "all mainlands, islands, towns, cities, castles and other places whatsoever discovered by them, however numerous they may happen to be, may not be frequented or visited by any other subjects of ours whatsoever without the licence of the aforesaid John [Cabot] and his sons". And finally, the king commanded that all English subjects "shall render good assistance to the aforesaid John [Cabot] and his sons and deputies, and that they shall give them all their favour and help as well in fitting out the ships or vessels as in buying stores and provisions with their money and in providing the other things which they must take with them on the said voyage".

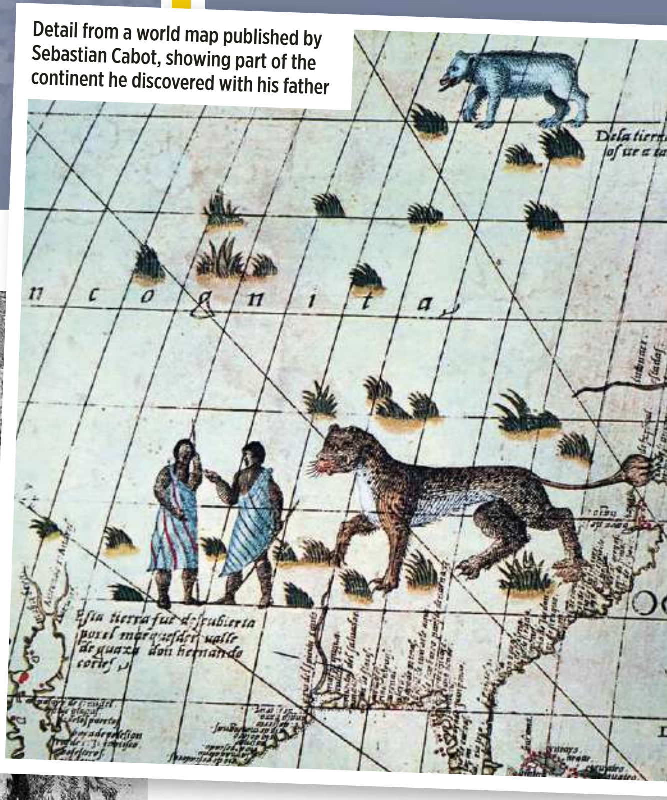
Buoyed by Henry's support, in 1496 Cabot chartered a ship that would take him and his crew from Bristol across the Atlantic to – or so they hoped – Asia's shores. However, it was not to be, and the first crossing ended in disaster. The Bristol merchant John Day revealed why this initial attempt failed, recording in a later letter: "Here is what happened: [Cabot] went with one ship, his crew confused him, he was short of supplies and ran into bad weather, and he decided to turn back."

Cabot was not dissuaded, though, and the following year he set out from Bristol once more in search of the far east and adventure. He recruited a crew of 18 men, most of whom were from Bristol – although a Burgundian man and a barber from Castiglione, near Genoa (who was hired to shave the crew's chins so that they kept up with the fashions of the time), seem to have also been onboard.

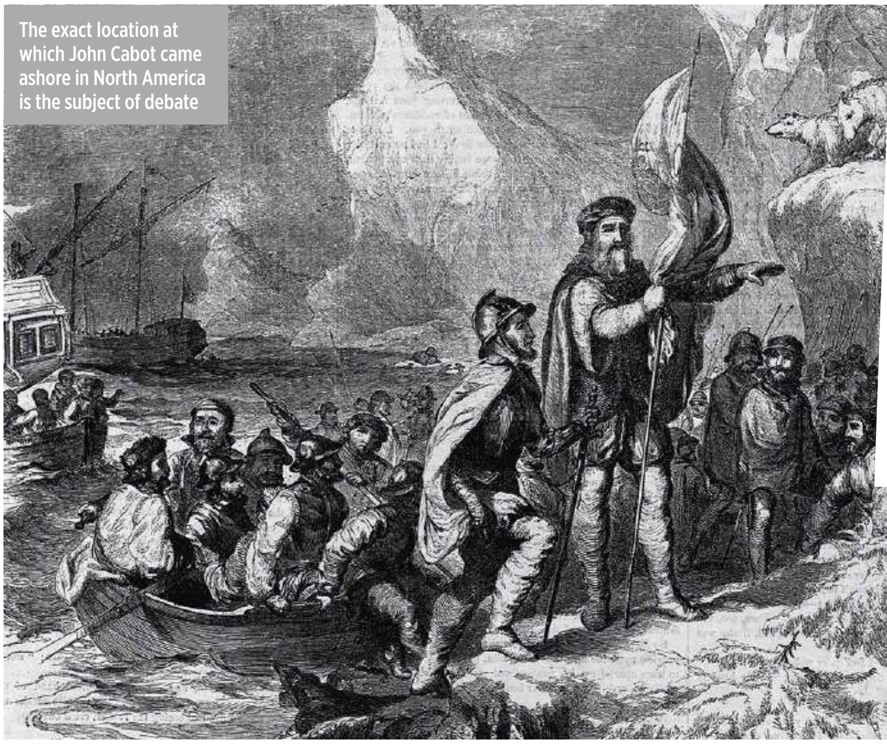
In May 1497 the adventurers left Bristol on a vessel named the *Matthew*, travelling across the Irish

THIS MONTH… 1496

ANNIVERSARIES THAT HAVE MADE HISTORY


n c o g n i t a
Esta tierra fue descubierta por el marques del valle de guaxaca don hernando cortes

Detail from a world map published by Sebastian Cabot, showing part of the continent he discovered with his father



The exact location at which John Cabot came ashore in North America is the subject of debate

◀ Sea and circumnavigating Ireland's southern coast, before sailing into the great unknown.

Happily, this second journey proved to be the opposite of the first. The ship was well-provisioned and the weather was largely kind. In June, some storms did set in, but once these squalls had passed Cabot heard the cries of birds in the air and saw bits of wood bobbing up and down with the waves. Land was drawing near.

On 24 June, the *Matthew* reached these unknown shores. Cabot's spirits couldn't have been higher: he thought he'd succeeded in discovering an island off the coast of Asia, believing that he had successfully plotted a fast trade route from England to the far east. But although he had reached land, it was not the coast he thought it to be – Cabot was actually standing on North American soil.

It's not known for certain exactly where the *Matthew* landed – Newfoundland, Cape Breton Island, and even Maine have all been suggested – but wherever it was, Cabot claimed it for Henry VII and called it the "New Founde Land". John Day wrote: "He [Cabot] landed at only one spot of the mainland, near the place where land was first sighted, and they disembarked there with a crucifix and raised banners with the arms of the Holy Father [Pope Alexander VI] and those of the King of England, my master [Henry VII]."

"Whatever Cabot's fate was, his exploits had huge ramifications – although not in the way that he had hoped"

The land that Cabot had proclaimed belonged to Henry VII was lovely indeed. The Milanese envoy Raimondo de Soncino recorded that "the land is excellent and temperate, and they [the crew] believe that brazil-wood and silk are native there. [The crew] assert that the sea is swarming with fish, which can be taken not only with the net, but in baskets let down with a stone, so that it sinks in the water." And Day wrote: "[The crew] found tall trees of the kind masts are made, and other smaller trees, and the country is very rich in grass."

HOMEWARD BOUND

But Cabot and his men didn't only find evidence of plentiful plants and creatures. According to Day, Cabot and his men spotted a trail that led further inland and "saw a site where a fire had been made, they saw manure of animals which they thought to be farm animals, and they saw a stick half a yard long pierced at both ends, carved and painted with brazil". Who, they wondered, had occupied this fair land already?

Taking snares that had been left out to catch animals as well as a needle for stitching nets – as evidence of the mysterious people that could be presented to the king on their return – Cabot and the others left the trail, topped up their water supplies and returned to the safety of the *Matthew*. Cabot mapped more of the coastline from the confines of the ship, naming a variety of landmarks, before turning the *Matthew* around and beginning the journey home.

The *Matthew* docked in Bristol on 6 August 1497, and Cabot hurried to meet the city's merchants who had financed his ventures and tell them of his success before rushing off to London where Henry was eagerly awaiting confirmation that the mission had borne fruit.

On 10 August, Cabot was granted

The replica *Matthew* sails beneath the Clifton Suspension Bridge to its home in Bristol's harbour

GETTY IMAGES X4, ALAMY X2

an audience with Henry VII. He triumphantly announced that he'd sailed to north-eastern Asia and found an island there, describing the temperate weather and abundant waters. Although he'd brought back no riches this time, Cabot acknowledged, he would certainly find them on his next trip – and bring one-fifth back to Henry, whose coffers would soon be stuffed with gold.

The king gave Cabot a £10 reward for his efforts and vowed to give him a yearly income. He'd likely have offered the explorer far more money if he had indeed returned laden with spices. But Cabot's mind was already on his next voyage across the Atlantic.

AN UNCERTAIN FATE

By the end of the month, Cabot was back in Bristol and plans for his third journey were well underway. This time, he reasoned, he would sail back to "New Founde Land" before continuing westwards, where he would, he was certain, reach Japan. There, he would establish a trading post and start sending precious items from the far east back home to England.

In 1498, Cabot headed for the Atlantic once more, this time the leader of five ships – one financed by the king himself, and the other four courtesy of Bristol's merchants – and commanding between 200 and 300 men. But the journey was soon marred by tragedy. At some point during the early stages of the voyage, one of the ships was seemingly caught in a storm and left unfit to cross the Atlantic, so it had to sail back to Ireland.

The other four ships continued on their journey – but what actually happened to them, and to their leader Cabot, is a mystery. Some believe the fleet sank beneath the waves in a savage storm; others have argued that Cabot was shipwrecked near to Newfoundland. There are also those who claim a freezing and starving crew mutinied somewhere across the Atlantic.

Whatever Cabot's fate, though, his exploits had huge ramifications – although not in the way he had hoped. Rather than making England the premier European trading partner with the far east, thanks to a high-speed ocean highway, Cabot had, in fact, proved that rapid Atlantic travel was possible – but to a different destination entirely. The British colonies that were subsequently set up in what is now the United States and Canada owed a great debt to Cabot, for forging the way across the seas. ⊙

MARCH ANNIVERSARIES

A LOOK BACK AT THREE OTHER EVENTS THAT HAVE TAKEN PLACE IN MARCH THROUGHOUT HISTORY

31 March 1889

TOWERING TRIUMPH

The Eiffel Tower is formally unveiled to the government and press, and, even though the lifts are not yet working, the structure is a huge hit. In the first week of being open to the public, nearly 30,000 people clamber up its many stairs to see Paris from above.

1 March AD 222

OFF WITH HIS HEAD

The Praetorian Guard turns on the maligned Roman emperor Elagabalus and throw its weight behind his cousin, Severus Alexander. Elagabalus is beheaded, along with his mother. Both bodies are then stripped and dragged across Rome, before the former emperor's corpse is flung into a river.

HARRY
WEJSCIE
ENTRANCE

24 March 1944

TUNNEL VISION

Allied POWs attempt to escape the German prisoner-of-war camp Stalag Luft III through a long tunnel they have dug – nicknamed 'Harry'. By the time the Germans have cottoned on, 76 men have crawled through it. Unfortunately, all but three escapees are swiftly recaptured.

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IN A NUTSHELL

YOUR BRIEF EXPLAINER TO HISTORY'S HOT TOPICS

The Corn Laws

Words: Emma Slattery Williams

WHAT WERE THE CORN LAWS?

The most infamous Corn Laws were the protectionist measures brought in by the British government in 1815, which restricted the amount of foreign grain that could be imported into the country.

Duty-free grain from overseas was only permitted if the price at home had reached 80 shillings per quarter for wheat (a quarter being roughly one-fifth of a tonne) – a price that was never achieved in the 30 years that the laws applied – 50 shillings for rye and 40 shillings for barley. Later, harsh import duties were also implemented that made buying from abroad unaffordable.

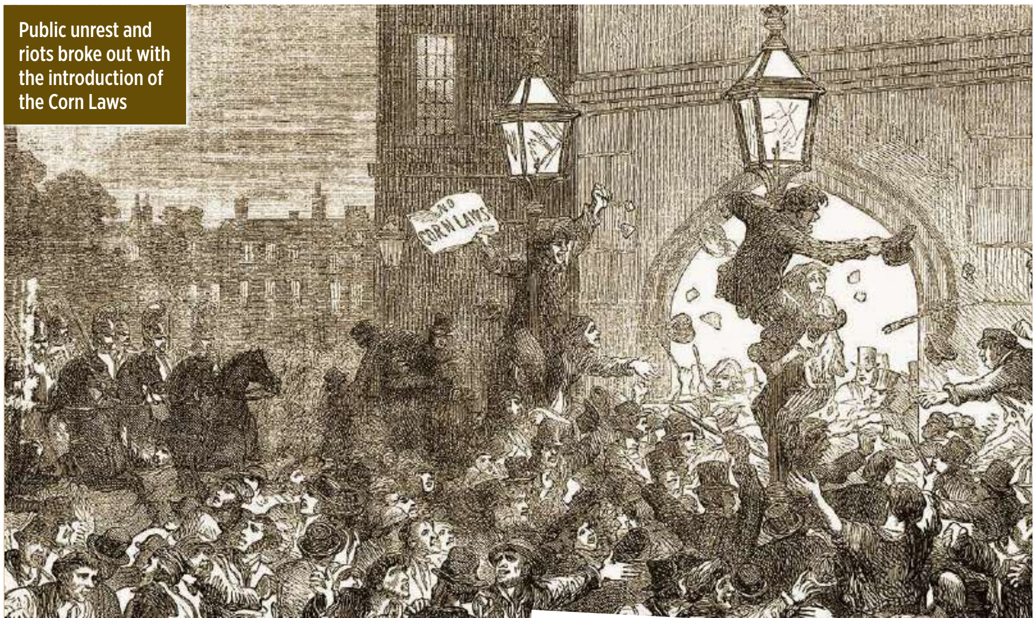
WHY WERE THEY IMPLEMENTED?

In 1815, with the Napoleonic Wars coming to an end, food prices were expected to fall as trade with Europe started up again and corn could be imported once more. However, importing grain from abroad was not in the interests of British landowners – which included many members of parliament – so the Tory government passed the Corn Laws.

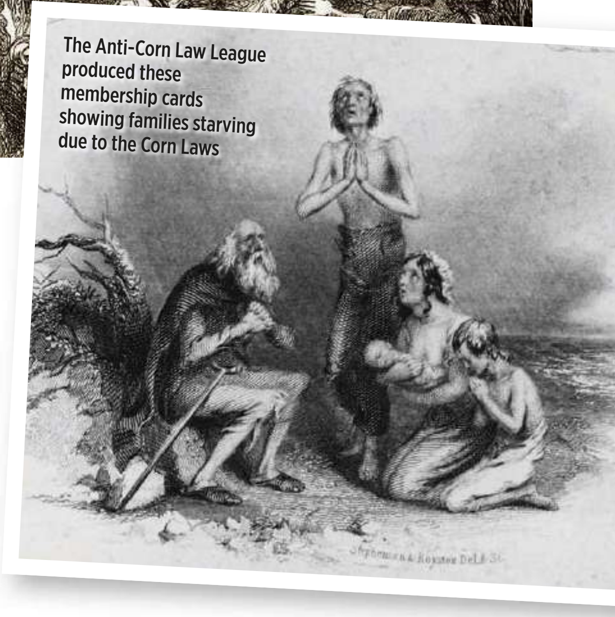
Economists at the time believed that relying on cheaper foreign corn would lower labourers' wages. Some also argued that introducing such measures put Britain closer to being self-sufficient, but the financial interests of British landowners was the main motivating factor in the decision.

HAD THERE BEEN ANY CORN LAWS BEFORE?

There had been previous Corn Laws in the 17th century, which had ensured a steady supply of grain while keeping prices at a reasonable level for both the farmers and consumers. When the prices rose, imports were encouraged by reducing duty, and when it fell a higher duty was imposed to keep domestic prices steady. However, in 1815, the taxes imposed seemed to aid only a minority of people and were intended to keep price artificially high, as they had been during the Napoleonic Wars.



Public unrest and riots broke out with the introduction of the Corn Laws



The Anti-Corn Law League produced these membership cards showing families starving due to the Corn Laws

> "Life for the working classes in Britain was very difficult"

WHAT IMPACT DID THE CORN LAWS HAVE?

The laws were seen as benefiting the landowners and farmers while keeping prices high for everyone else. The lower classes saw living expenses increase and had far less disposable income. In the years that followed the Napoleonic Wars, Britain suffered a number of poor harvests and the price of bread rose considerably. Many labourers had also seen their wages cut, making life for the working classes in Britain very difficult.

WHAT WAS THE REACTION TO THE LAWS IN BRITAIN?

The general public were outraged, and riots broke out – most notably in 1816, when failing harvests saw prices soar even higher. Known as The Year Without a Summer, 1816 was badly affected by a volcanic eruption the previous year, in modern-day Indonesia, which caused disruption to the world's weather system. The resulting cold weather caused crops to fail, which in turn caused famines ▶

GETTY IMAGES X1, ALAMY X1

◀ across the world.

Armed guards were tasked with defending MPs when the Corn Laws bill was passed, as public opinion was low and tensions high. The working classes saw the act as a prime example of politicians showing little thought for them, though some farmers welcomed the laws as they protected them and their families from potential destitution caused by competition from abroad.

DID ANYONE ELSE OPPOSE THE CORN LAWS?

During the Industrial Revolution, Britain's economy had become one of the most dynamic in the world, and there had been several calls to remove tariffs. Proponents of free trade believed this would increase employment, help international relations and boost Britain's economy.

Factory owners and employers were concerned, too – they feared that they would need to raise workers' wages, as people were having to spend more on basic necessities such as bread. And, with a large proportion of the country still without the vote, repealing the Corn Laws became popular among groups seeking wider enfranchisement, such as the Chartists. Many members of the Whig party also opposed the Corn Laws, but they were not repealed even after the Whigs came to power in the 1830s.

In 1838, the Anti-Corn Law League was established in Manchester by manufacturer Richard Cobden and orator John Bright. Cobden worked hard to influence Conservative Prime Minister Robert Peel that the Corn Laws should be repealed and became an MP himself in 1841.

The League was one of the largest movements at the time and benefited from a lot of funding and well thought out campaigning. *The Economist* was founded in 1843 with the purpose of promoting and gathering support for the repeal of the Corn Laws. Such sophisticated attempts were difficult for the government to ignore for too long.

WHAT DID ROBERT PEEL THINK OF THE CORN LAWS?

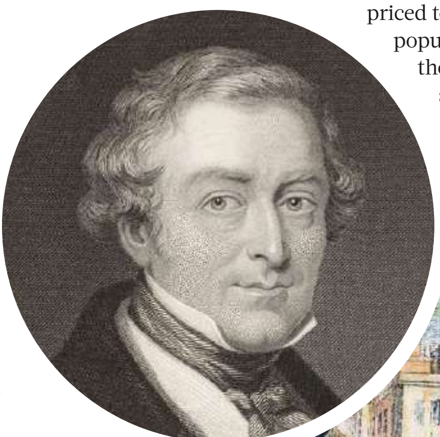
Robert Peel, a Tory, had previously been Prime Minister between 1834-35 and was re-elected in 1841. He had made an enemy of traditionalists within the party when he reversed his stance and supported Catholic emancipation.

Peel wanted to abolish the Corn Laws as part of a wider reform of trade in Britain. He began reducing import duties on a host of items including cotton and sugar – soon only corn remained.

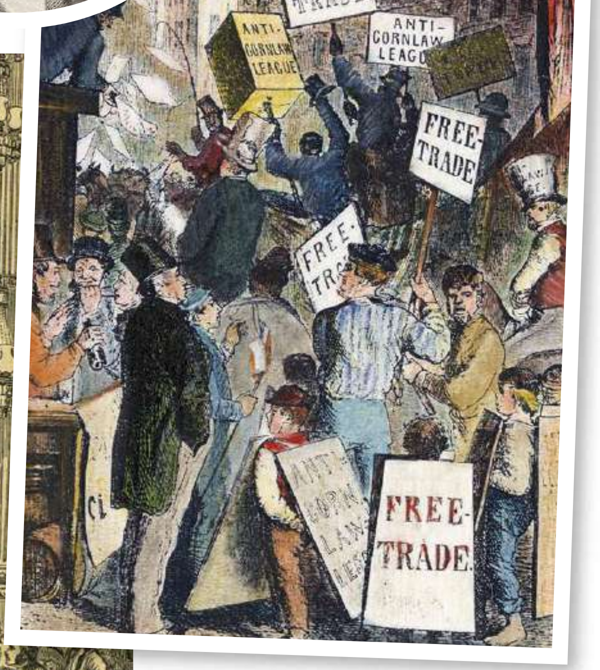
HOW WAS THE IRISH FAMINE CONNECTED TO THE LAWS' REPEAL?

Between 1845 and 1849, Ireland suffered from a devastating famine, caused by the failure of its potato crops. Ireland lost an eighth of its population (more than one million people died) and Scotland also suffered badly.

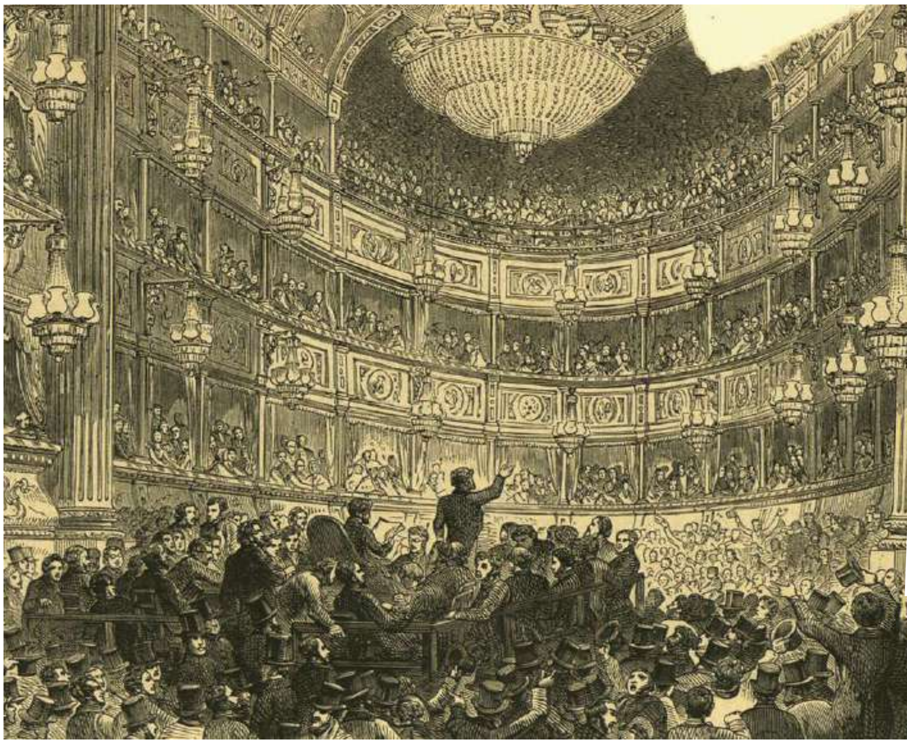
Potatoes were a staple food in Ireland, especially for the poor in rural areas. A lot of other produce in Ireland was priced too high for the majority of the population, forcing them to rely on the potato – which was now in short supply, too. The fact that many larger farms exported



British Prime Minister Robert Peel oversaw the repeal of the Corn Laws



ABOVE: **Many protested for the Corn Laws repeal**



LEFT: **The Anti-Corn Law League had a great deal of support – this 1843 meeting took place at the Theatre Royal on Drury Lane**

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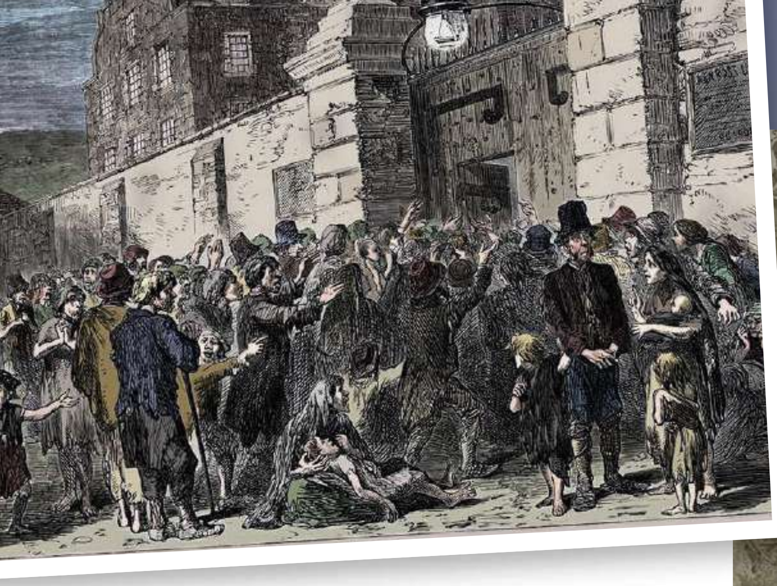

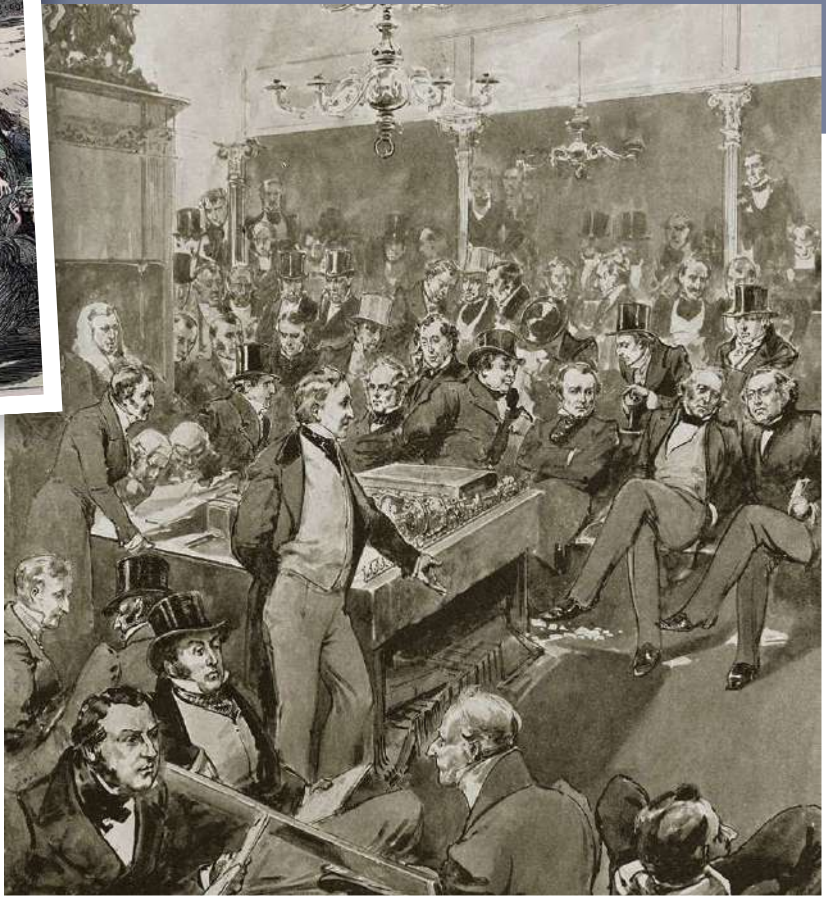

ABOVE: **Around one million people in Ireland died during the famine of 1845-49**

RIGHT: **Robert Peel shown in early 1846 debating for the repeal of the Corn Laws in the House of Commons**

grain and other high quality foods to Britain strained relations between the Irish people and the British government.

The British government's response to the famine was woefully inadequate. Initially, the burden of helping Irish farmers – who relied on the potato for both food and income – was placed on landlords but, often unable to financially support their struggling tenants, many landlords evicted them instead. British assistance mainly took the form of loans, the funding of soup kitchens, and the provision of employment on road building and other public works. Over the course of the famine, millions of Irish emigrated to other parts of Britain, the US and Canada. In the seven years between 1844 and 1851, Ireland's population dropped from nearly 8.4m to 6.6m.

HOW WERE THE CORN LAWS REPEALED?

The Irish famine presented Peel with a situation that his government could not ignore forever. In December 1845, the leader of the opposition, Lord John Russell, announced that he agreed with a repeal of the Corn Laws. Peel resigned his position due to the division in his cabinet, but as Russell was unable to form a government of his own, Peel returned with the backing of Queen Victoria.

Peel attempted to demonstrate the economic benefits of repealing the Corn Laws to MPs – while battling against an opponent within his own party, Benjamin Disraeli. Attacks against Peel within parliament at times became personal. At one point, Lord George Bentinck accused Peel of being the cause of death of his relative, former Prime Minister George Canning, many years previously by refusing to serve on his cabinet. Peel had to be calmed down and nearly challenged Bentinck to a duel.

Many Conservatives saw the famine in Ireland as a poor excuse for repeal, with a passionate and angry Peel exclaiming: "Are you to hesitate in averting famine because it possibly may not come? Good God … how much diarrhoea and bloody flux and dysentery [must] a people bear before it becomes necessary for you to provide them with food?"

Two-thirds of Tories opposed the repeal – though it was eventually passed, thanks to Whig support.

WHAT HAPPENED TO ROBERT PEEL?

A few hours after the repeal was agreed by the House of Lords, the Whigs and Tory rebels voted down the Irish Coercion Bill, which would have granted new powers to strengthen security in Ireland. It was a bill MPs were all expected to support, but many did not, with the intention of bringing down Peel who was forced to resign. He died four years later.

> "The chaos caused in parliament over the Corn laws split the Tory party and kept them out of power"

FIRECLAY PIPES
SLATES BRICKS CEMENT
Irish Rebellion_ May 1916.
Talbot Street, Dublin, held against a rebel charge.
Picture taken under fire.

Lingering resentment towards the government would fuel later Irish uprisings

WHAT WERE THE LEGACIES OF THE CORN LAWS?

The chaos caused in parliament over the Corn Laws split the Conservative party and kept them out of power for much of the next 30 years. Many of those Tories who had supported Peel joined an independent bloc, and many of these would later join what became the Liberal Party.

Rebellions broke out in Ireland due to the British government's inadequate response to the famine and these would influence the later nationalist movements that created the Irish Republican Brotherhood, pivotal to the 1916 Easter Rising.

More broadly, the repeal of the Corn Laws is seen by some historians and economists as a move towards free trade in Britain – removing restrictions from import and exports. ⊙

LISTEN

BBC RADIO 4

Melvyn Bragg discusses The Corn Laws on an episode of *In Our Time* on BBC Radio 4.

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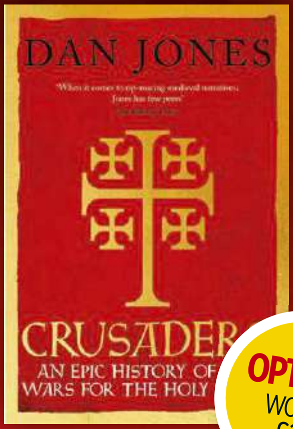
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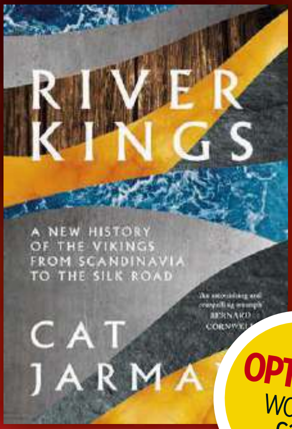
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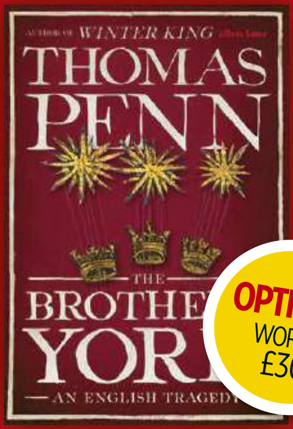
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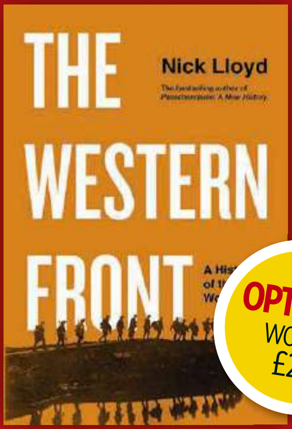
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YOUR ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO

MEDIEVAL QUEENS

PODCAST
Elena Woodacre explores medieval queenship on the HistoryExtra podcast
historyextra.com/medieval-queens-qa

The medieval period is often associated with stories of powerful kings engaging in bloodthirsty battles. From Charlemagne to Edward I of England, it is usually male rulers whose lives have been immortalised in the history books and who are credited with transforming their nations' respective destinies – whether for better or for worse. Often overlooked, however, is the vital role played by queens and other female rulers of the period.

In this month's essential guide, we examine some of the most powerful and influential royal women of the Middle Ages, revealing stories of queens who ruled in their own right and those who pulled the strings behind the scenes. And, with help from queenship expert Dr Elena Woodacre, we'll assess the skills required to be a strong medieval queen and stand firm in the face of adversity.

28 Q&A: Medieval queens and power

How much control did medieval queens have over their subjects and court? Dr Elena Woodacre answers the key questions

31 Eleanor of Aquitaine

An in-depth look at the life of one of medieval Europe's most powerful queens

32 The four Matildas

Why four women with the same forename would come to wield exceptional influence over England during the 11th and 12th centuries

36 Q&A: Medieval queens and image

How your subjects saw you – or how you allowed yourself to be seen – was incredibly important for queens during the Middle Ages

39 Isabella of France

The story of the woman who forged good relations between France and England, before eventually deposing her own husband

40 9 queens you might not have heard of

From Seondeok of Silla to Razia, Sultan of Delhi, these rulers may not be as well-known, but are all as deserving of wider recognition

44 Q&A: Medieval queens and family

How did medieval queens balance their roles as wives, mothers and rulers?

47 Philippa of Hainault

The life of Edward III's devoted wife, dubbed the 'Mother of the English Nation'

48 Margaret of Anjou

The French-born queen who would help lead the Lancastrian faction during the chaotic Wars of the Roses

49 Elizabeth Woodville and Edward IV

Inside the union between Edward IV and his 'commoner' bride Elizabeth Woodville

54 13 more medieval queens

We delve into the lives of other royal women who sat on the throne

DR ELENA (ELLIE) WOODACRE is senior lecturer of early modern European history at the University of Winchester. She specialises in queenship and royal studies, and is editor-in-chief of the *Royal Studies Journal*. Her forthcoming book, *Queens and Queenship*, will be published later this year.

EVERYTHING YOU WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT...

MEDIEVAL QUEENS AND POWER

Dr Elena Woodacre answers key questions about the extent to which royal women exerted their influence during the Middle Ages

Q: How much power did medieval queens actually have?

A: One of the big debates in this area of research is whether we should use the terms 'power' or 'agency' when referring to medieval queens – agency is being able to decide something for yourself and not have someone tell you what to do, whereas power is more about telling *someone else* what to do.

Agency is often used in relation to medieval queens, but there is an argument that this might underplay the power of queens, because the so-called 'soft power' is harder to see. That type of influence, particularly when exerted over queens' husbands, may have taken place in private and not necessarily been noted down. Equally, sometimes it's not recorded because – especially in the Middle Ages – monastic chroniclers perhaps didn't want to overplay the power of women, or maybe weren't as aware of the power of women in those more intimate settings.

Obviously it's much easier to see regnant and regent queens exercising power and authority, by ruling in their own right, ruling on behalf of an underage child or an absentee king, or standing in for a king who is incapacitated (as in the cases of Margaret of Anjou and Isabeau of Bavaria, queen consorts of Henry VI of England and Charles VI of France respectively).

One of the things that I focus on in my academic research is power-sharing dynamics – the idea that every ruling couple, whether a king and queen consort or a regnant queen and a king consort, has to decide how they're going to share power. Sometimes the balance is even, but other times more power will lie with one individual. But the key thing is that they both have to be happy with that split. And when they're not happy, that's when we see real problems.

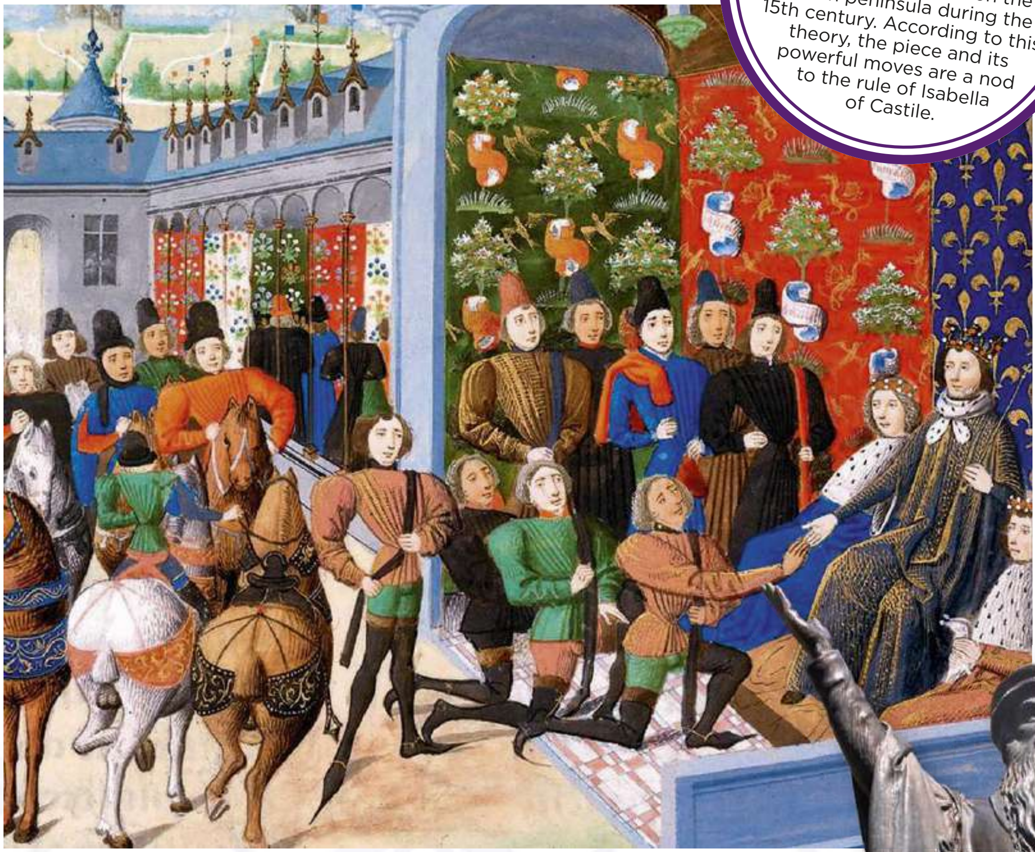
DID YOU KNOW?

GETTING ON BOARD

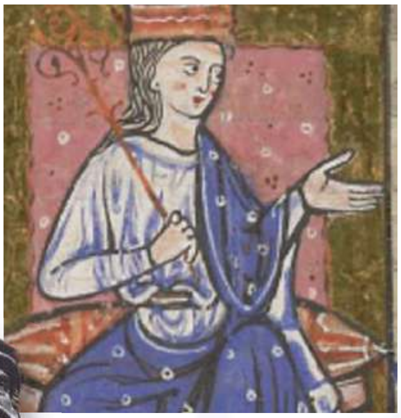
The 'queen' in modern chess is thought to have been added to the game by players on the Iberian peninsula during the 15th century. According to this theory, the piece and its powerful moves are a nod to the rule of Isabella of Castile.

Q: What were medieval attitudes towards regnant queens?

A: The early modern period often springs to mind when historians talk about the 'gynocracy debate'. It's a discussion that's dominated by the likes of Scottish minister and theologian John Knox,



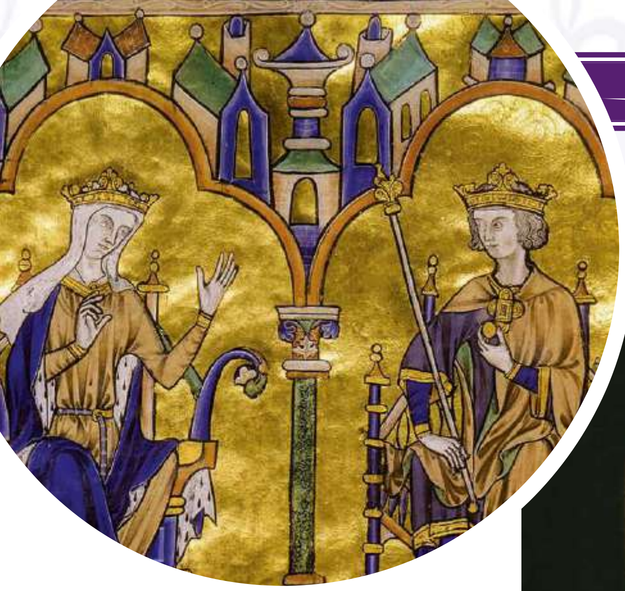
Isabeau of Bavaria with Charles VI of France, for whom she deputised during his bouts of illness



ABOVE: **Æthelflæd, ruler of Mercia, was renowned for her wisdom**

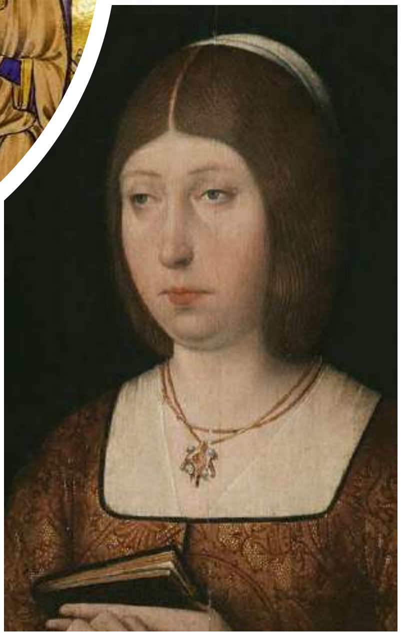
LEFT: **A statue of John Knox, who strongly opposed female rule**

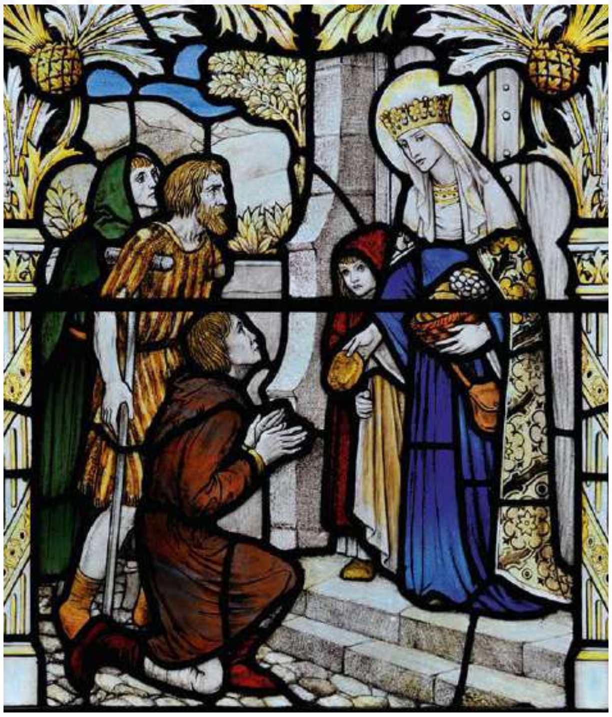
ALAMY X5, GETTY IMAGES X2



LEFT: **Blanche of Castile with son Louis, for whom she was regent**

BELOW: **Isabella of Castile, painted in c1490 at the height of her power**





A stained-glass window in Cumbria depicting Margaret of Scotland, who was renowned for her charitable acts towards the poor and was later canonised

who published a famous work in 1558 named *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*, arguing that rule by females was unnatural and contrary to the teachings of the Bible.

In the Middle Ages, however, we see a different kind of intellectual debate taking place between writers about the role of women in society in general, and within that, there was praise for strong female rulers. Blanche of Castile, regent for Louis IX, for example, was praised for her ability, while Æthelflæd of Mercia was heralded for her wisdom.

That's not to say that there wasn't any pushback against women rulers in the medieval period, though; it was harder for women to come to the throne and harder for women to overtly exercise power in some ways. And they were often second-choice successors: only in the absence of a male heir or if there was no other option to continue the dynasty. But at the same time, resistance to female rule wasn't a given – especially if they ruled well.

> **"Women were often second-choice successors, but resistance to female rule wasn't a given"**

Q: Who would you say were the most powerful queens of the Middle Ages?

A: This is a hard one! One of my favourite medieval queens actually comes right at the end of the Middle Ages, and that's Isabella of Castile, who was an incredibly powerful queen. She had to fight tooth and nail for her place on the throne, and once she got there, she had to whip Castile back into shape after a century of turmoil – the 15th century for Iberia was as traumatic as it was in England with its Wars of the Roses. But Isabella rose to the challenge.

Obviously, we have to credit some of her success to her ruling partnership with husband Ferdinand of Aragon, but Isabella was never steamrolled by Ferdinand. She held her position as the regnant queen of Castile, and she and Ferdinand created a kind of golden age in their two neighbouring kingdoms.

Another very powerful queen was Margaret, queen of Denmark, Norway (from 1387) and Sweden (from 1389). Margaret is particularly interesting because she was a queen and yet not quite a queen – her power was wielded through various male relatives – but there's no doubt that she was the true power behind the throne.

Q: How important was patronage for a medieval queen, in terms of power and influence?

A: The act of patronage – and specifically religious patronage – was very important during the Middle Ages. It's a really active area of queenship studies because it was a way that queens could exert a great deal of influence.

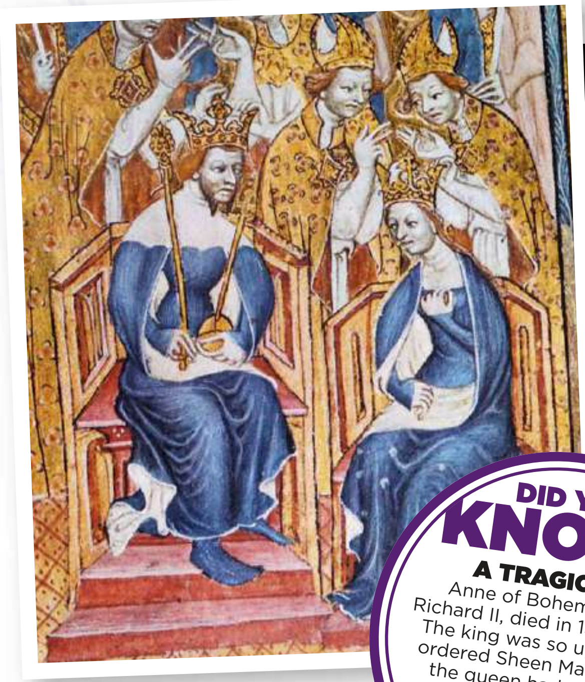
While religious patronage could spill over into cultural patronage in terms of sponsoring the decoration of palaces and churches, it also included the founding of religious institutions that could signal political alliances at the same time. Margaret of France, Isabella of France and Philippa of Hainault, for example, were all patrons of Greyfriars' Church in London, but that patronage was also connected to their mutual Capetian ties (they were all related to the Capetian dynasty of France).

Being on good terms with the Church could be beneficial to medieval queens in other ways, too. For example, when John of England refused to pay Berengaria of Navarre the pension she was owed as the queen dowager and widow of Richard I, Pope Innocent III intervened on her behalf.

Isabella of Aragon, 13th-century queen consort of Denis of Portugal, is another example of a medieval queen who used patronage to her own advantage. Her religious activities and religious patronage not only gave her power and influence during her lifetime, but she was canonised as St Elizabeth of Portugal in 1625, and thus left a substantial legacy. Margaret of Scotland (c1045/6–1093) was similarly canonised and held up as a shining example of a medieval queen.

Q: Is there a particular point during the medieval period that queens held more power than in other times?

A: There used to be a feeling that the early Middle Ages – when you see women like Emma of Normandy and Edith of Wessex – was a high point for medieval queenship. This is because the looser structures of monarchy gave women far more ▶



LEFT: **Richard II and Anne of Bohemia both came from equally powerful stock**

MAIN: **The tomb of Henry IV and Joan of Navarre. His death put her in a tough position**

DID YOU KNOW?

A TRAGIC TALE

Anne of Bohemia, wife of Richard II, died in 1394, aged 28. The king was so upset that he ordered Sheen Manor – where the queen had died – to be demolished. Richard remarried, but was eventually buried with Anne.

space, if you like, for power and authority.

Then, as succession became more regularised and primogeniture was more widely established, it was argued that queens primarily became ‘brood mares’ and that their power and influence waned until the early modern period when women like Catherine de’ Medici (wife of Henry II of France) and England’s Tudor queens came along.

However, that’s a theory that has really been challenged, and actually, we can see a lot more continuity in terms of the power queens exercised. Yes, the nature of power changed as monarchy changed, but if you look at the 12th century – the proposed ‘low point’ for medieval queens – there are many reigning women wielding a great deal of influence: Urraca of Castile, Melisende of Jerusalem, Tamar of Georgia and other Byzantine empresses, for instance.

Q: Is there a difference in the ways queens ruled in Europe compared with those elsewhere in the medieval world?

A: The assumption would be that queenship changed a lot from the ancient to the modern era, and that it differed according to religion and geographical contexts. But one of the things I have found is that the expectations of queens and how they were expected to behave was mirrored across the world.

Demonstrating piety and religious patronage, for example, can be seen in Japan and elsewhere in Asia in this period. The importance of motherhood and maternity were also constants across different royal cultures.

> “The importance of motherhood and maternity were both constants across different royal cultures”

Q: Were queens from royal backgrounds able to wield more power than so-called ‘commoner’ queens?

A: In the European context, it was the norm, if you like, for a queen to be a princess. But at the end of the Middle Ages we see Anne Neville and Elizabeth Woodville as queen consorts in England – women who were both non-royal.

One advantage that foreign princesses had over internal queens was the backing and standing of her dynasty – someone like Anne of Bohemia, for example, the daughter of the Holy Roman Emperor, would have had an immediate gravitas at her new court. If her husband, Richard II, had tried to cast her aside, he could have faced huge repercussions from Anne’s family on the continent.

But it was a different experience if you didn’t have that dynastical backing. Elizabeth Woodville, wife of Edward IV, did have royal connections through her mother, Jacquetta of Luxembourg, and many members of the Woodville family were given good positions at court and made advantageous marriages, so she had an internal network of support around her. Yet the fact that the Woodvilles rose so high also caused a great deal of tension. Building a network of support was crucial to a medieval queen’s success, as was effective networking at court.

Foreign queens were expected to keep up that network with family abroad – ensuring she was useful in terms of maintaining positive relations with her home country, which was usually the whole point of the marriage in the first place. At the same time, however, many foreign queens were also considered to be spies for their homelands, and there was always suspicion as to where their loyalties lay.

A queen I’ve done a lot of work on is Joan of Navarre, who was placed in a really tough position during the Hundred Years’ War. Joan had chosen not to return to France after the death of her (second) husband, Henry IV, which meant she was living in England when her stepson, Henry V, went to war with France. After the battle of Agincourt, Joan was leading services of thanksgiving for Henry V in the knowledge that her son-in-law had been killed and one of her sons (by her first husband John IV, duke of Brittany) had been taken prisoner.

Joan was viewed with a great deal of suspicion and was even placed under house arrest for several years on a charge of witchcraft. But ultimately it was about neutralising her, and the fact that Henry V needed the money from her lands in order to fund the war.

GETTY IMAGES X2, ALAMY X1

ELEANOR OF AQUITAINE

THE POWERFUL DYNAST

Eleanor of Aquitaine, born c1122-24, is perhaps one of the most famous queens of medieval western Europe. The only woman to be crowned queen of both France and England, her long life, and position as one of the wealthiest duchesses of western Europe, enabled her to exert great influence in both countries. Eleanor's early life at the Aquitanian court afforded her a great education, and sophisticated upbringing.

Upon the death of her father, William X, duke of Aquitaine, in April 1137, Eleanor inherited the duchy and was taken under the care of Louis VI, king of France. Married to his son Louis VII some three months later at the Cathedral of Saint-André, Bordeaux, Eleanor's first marriage was far from harmonious due to their differing personalities.

Eleanor's ability to exercise power as queen consort was increasingly restricted by Louis and his advisors. A daughter, Marie, was born in April 1145, but the lack of a male heir and Eleanor's dissatisfaction with the marriage led to her request for an annulment whilst she and her husband were on the Second Crusade.

Unsubstantiated allegations of Eleanor conducting an incestuous affair with her uncle, Raymond of Poitiers, prince of Antioch, and her future father-in-law, Geoffrey of Anjou, are the cause of much of Eleanor's infamy.

QUEEN OF ENGLAND

After her divorce from Louis in 1152, Eleanor swiftly married Henry, duke of Normandy – later Henry II of England – in Poitiers Cathedral.

The early years of Henry and Eleanor's partnership were largely successful, and they ruled the Angevin realms until Henry's death in 1189, producing several heirs in the first two decades of the union. Their partnership was not entirely harmonious, though, as Henry began to restrict Eleanor's power in the 1160s.

Having spent the 1150s and 1160s largely in England and other Angevin territories, Eleanor returned to Aquitaine in 1168 to rule. Tensions between the couple escalated, leading to the 1173 rebellion of Eleanor and her sons (who included future kings Richard the Lionheart and John Lackland), although Eleanor's role in the uprising is disputed. After the rebellion, Eleanor was imprisoned for at least a decade. She was given permission to travel under supervision at various points, but her relationship with Henry never recovered.

After 1189, Eleanor continued to exercise power beyond the role of queen mother; she was politically active and occasional regent for her sons. She retired to Fontevraud Abbey, Chinon, before her death in 1204. ⊙

FACT FILE

BORN: c1122-24

DIED: 1 April 1204

QUEEN FROM: 1 August 1137 until 21 March 1152 (in France); 19 December 1154 until 6 July 1189 (in England)

PARENTS: William X, Duke of Aquitaine, and Aliénor de Châtellerault

CHILDREN: Ten, including Henry the Young King, King Richard the Lionheart, and King John.

REMEMBERED FOR: Her influence on both England and France, and her questionable role in her sons' rebellion.

GETTY IMAGES

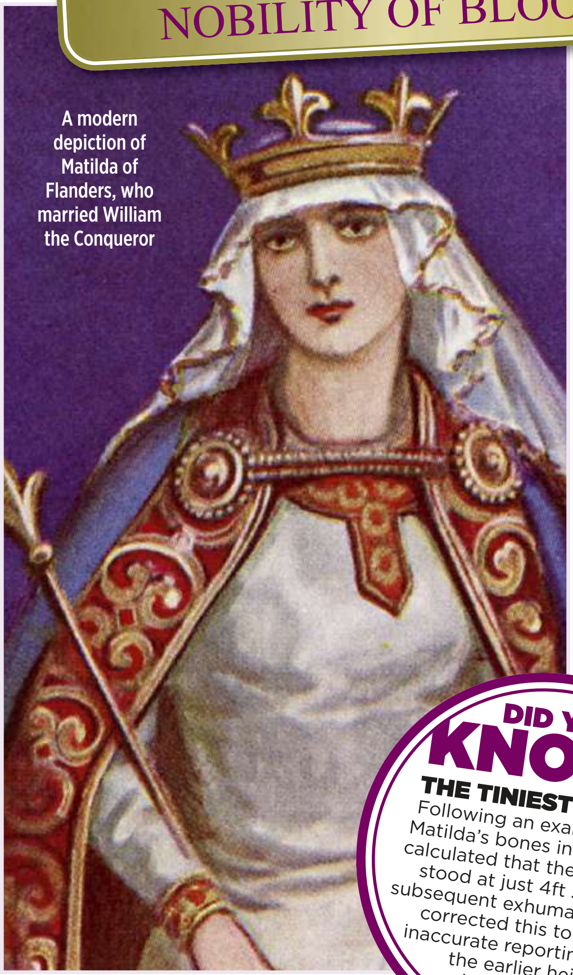
DR GABRIELLE STOREY is a historian of Angevin queenship, power, and sexuality and founder of the educational blog Team Queens. She recently gained her PhD from the University of Winchester and has appeared on the BBC Sounds podcast *You're Dead To Me* with Greg Jenner and Rachel Parris

THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT MATILDA...

They may not have all been crowned, but four remarkable women – each bearing the same forename – would come to wield exceptional influence over England during the 11th and 12th centuries. **Catherine Capel** tells their stories

MATILDA OF FLANDERS

NOBILITY OF BLOOD AND CHARACTER



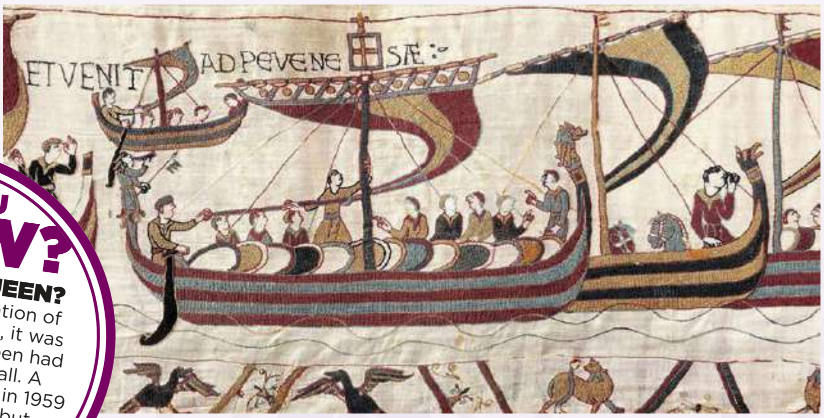
A modern depiction of Matilda of Flanders, who married William the Conqueror

Matilda of Flanders was consort to one of England's most famous kings, William the Conqueror.

However, Matilda did not start her life in the public eye. The daughter of Baldwin V of Flanders and Adela of France, Matilda originally held the title of Duchess of Normandy, having married William (then duke) in 1050. With the couple being distant cousins and William having been born a bastard, the union was certainly an unconventional and unpopular choice. Archbishop Malger of Rouen, for instance, insisted that the couple were too closely related and demanded that it should be annulled.

William and Matilda both protested, but Pope Nicholas II agreed to grant them a dispensation if they built two monasteries as recompense, to which the couple acquiesced. Matilda founded La Trintié in Caen, which received her patronage while she was both duchess and queen.

Prior to the Norman conquest in 1066, Matilda was actively involved in government, witnessing William's charters and issuing her own. Although



A scene from the Bayeux Tapestry depicting William the Conqueror's ship, *Mora*, crossing the Channel. Queen Matilda would not join her husband in England for another two years

DID YOU KNOW?

THE TINIEST QUEEN?

Following an examination of Matilda's bones in 1819, it was calculated that the queen had stood at just 4ft 2in tall. A subsequent exhumation in 1959 corrected this to 5ft, but inaccurate reporting means the earlier height has prevailed.

GETTY IMAGES X4, ALAMY X1

Matilda did not embark on the famous journey to England with William, she made sure he had a grand vessel to escort him. Named *Mora*, (a word thought to be Flemish in origin), the boat featured a statue of a child blowing a horn and pointing forwards, supposedly towards England. Notably, it was depicted on the Bayeux Tapestry, where the figure of the child can be clearly seen.

A FIERCE FAMILY FEUD

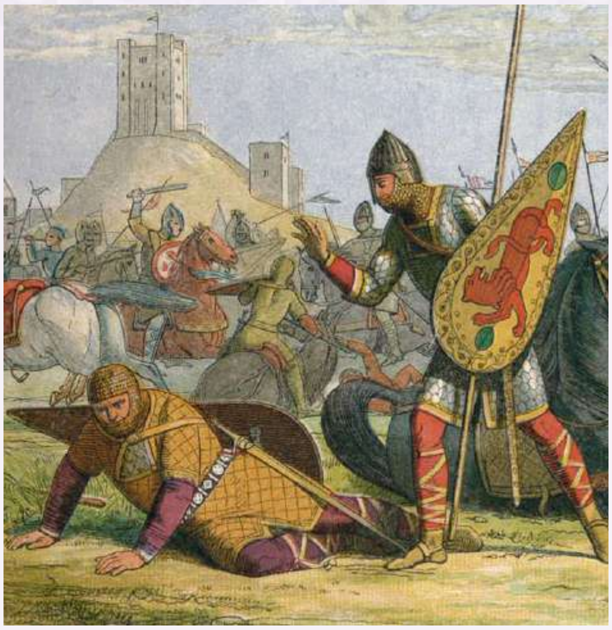
The queen's involvement in government continued in William's absence, and she safeguarded the duchy of Normandy as his lieutenant alongside their eldest son, Robert. This was a role that Matilda undertook throughout her reign, and after her coronation in 1068, she was recognised as his queen-lieutenant.

While the marriage of Matilda and William has often been depicted as happy and harmonious, there was a notable source of tension between the couple. Specifically, this stemmed from the stormy relationship between William and Robert, who clashed over who should have control of Normandy.

In 1077, Robert rebelled against his father and attempted to wrest control of the duchy from him by force. During the rebellion, Matilda supplied her son with money and troops, and when William discovered her involvement, he is said to have flown into a rage, accusing her of desiring his downfall.

In response, Matilda claimed that her actions had been driven from her love for Robert as a mother, and her inability to carry on living in luxury while their son wallowed in poverty.

Fortunately, father and son were reconciled (something Matilda was instrumental in arranging), and the dispute failed to do any long-term damage to the king and queen's relationship. Matilda continued to wield power in Normandy, and when she died in 1083, William buried her in queenly splendour at La Trintié – the abbey she so adored.


William's son, Robert, is depicted wounding him in a battle over the duchy of Normandy. The pair were eventually reconciled with help from the queen

MATILDA OF SCOTLAND

A WOMAN OF EXCEPTIONAL HOLINESS

When Matilda of Scotland married the newly crowned Henry I in 1100, she was certainly no stranger to life in England.

The daughter of Malcolm III, King of Scots, and Margaret of Wessex (later canonised as St Margaret of Scotland), the young princess spent much of her childhood being educated at Romsey Abbey in Hampshire, where she was equipped with knowledge of languages and literature – important attributes for the wife of a sovereign.

However, her time at Romsey created a scandal that nearly prevented Matilda from becoming queen. While living at the abbey, there were rumours Matilda had taken the veil and become a nun, meaning she could not marry Henry I. But when confronted with the accusation, Matilda took matters into her own hands, declaring that she had taken no vows because it had never been her wish nor her parents' for her to do so.

Instead, the young Matilda claimed that she had only worn a veil on the instruction of her superiors and as a ploy to prevent anyone from recognising her or attempting to steal her away and force her into a marriage.

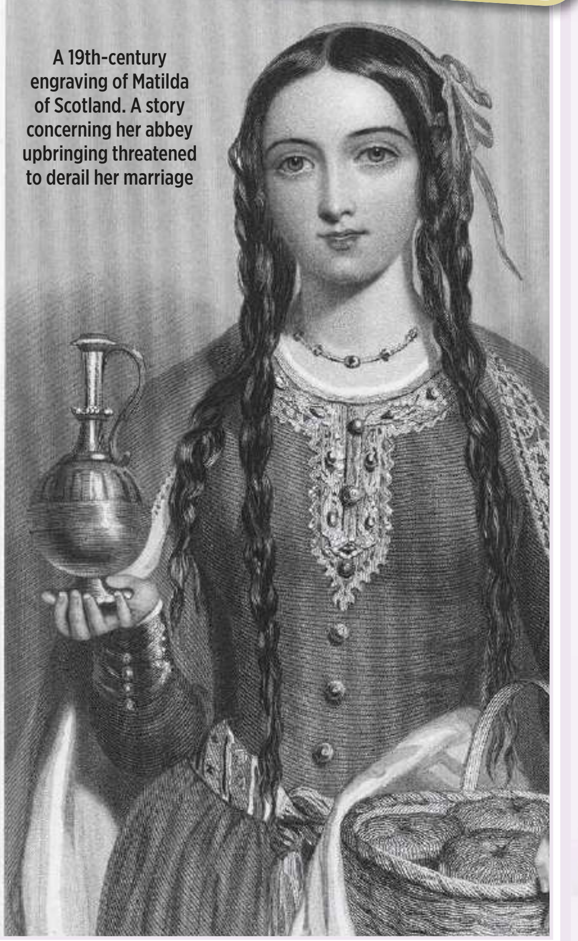
In fact, it had been prophesised that the Matilda would become queen of England since the day of her baptism. According to one story, the young princess pulled on the royal headdress of her godmother, Matilda of Flanders – an apparent sign of the path that lay ahead.

THE QUEEN OF PIETY

When this prophecy eventually became true, Queen Matilda fulfilled her dynastic duty by providing Henry with children, giving birth to a girl, who became the Empress Matilda (*see page 34*), and a son, William, named after Henry's late father, William the Conqueror.

Crucially the queen was also widely involved in key matters of governance, witnessing her husband's charters, presiding over judicial matters, and serving as his queen-lieutenant while he was involved in reconquering his father's lands in Normandy. And, like other medieval queens, Matilda was ▶

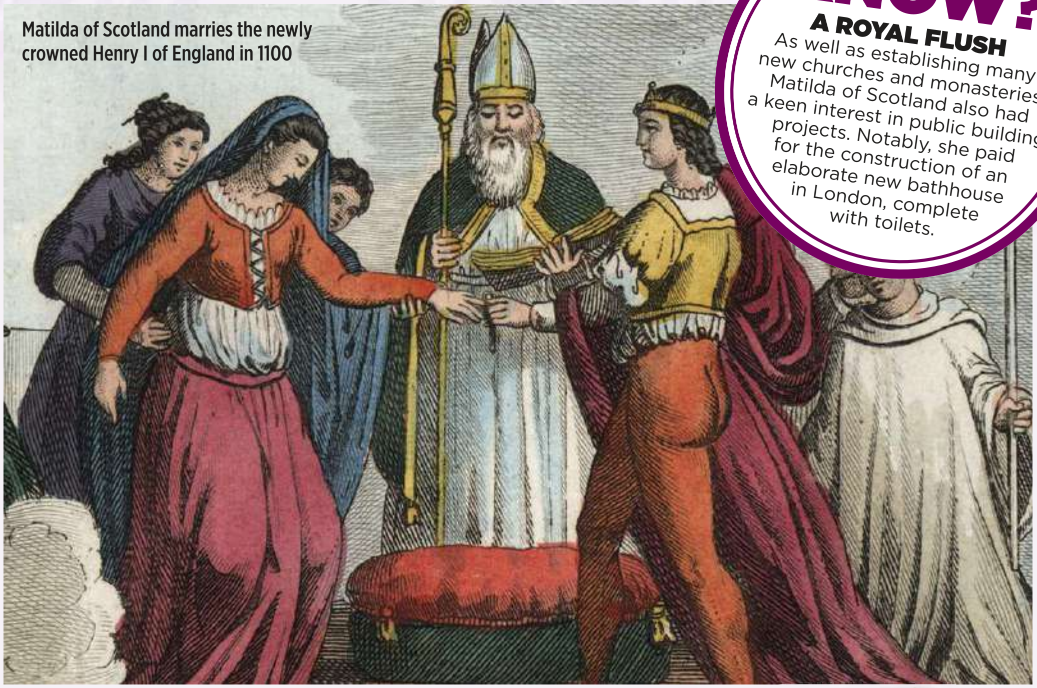
> **"While living at Romsey Abbey, there were rumours that she had taken the veil and become a nun"**


A 19th-century engraving of Matilda of Scotland. A story concerning her abbey upbringing threatened to derail her marriage

◀ a renowned patron, commissioning books, acquiring artwork and building new bridges and monastic houses. Her legacy of patronage with the Church in particular would come to cement her reputation as a 'pious queen' – a model for all those who would come after her.

Famously, Matilda wrote numerous letters to her friend and spiritual advisor, Archbishop Anselm of Canterbury, who had been sent into exile by Henry I following a dispute over investiture (the right for the monarch to appoint bishops and abbots over the pope). Although the matter was later resolved, Matilda had claimed she would discard her royal robes in the manner of the biblical queen Esther in protest at Anselm's treatment.

In 1118, Matilda died and was buried in Westminster Abbey. In the eyes of her devotees, 'Good Queen Maud' would be remembered as a "truly incomparable woman" and a queen "whose name [would] be blessed through the ages".



Matilda of Scotland marries the newly crowned Henry I of England in 1100

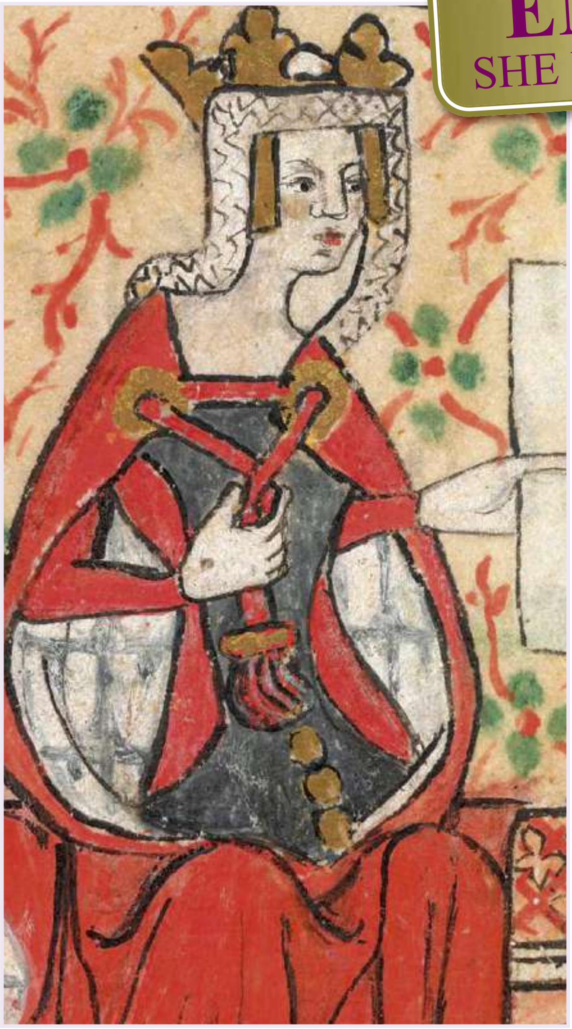
DID YOU KNOW?

A ROYAL FLUSH

As well as establishing many new churches and monasteries, Matilda of Scotland also had a keen interest in public building projects. Notably, she paid for the construction of an elaborate new bathhouse in London, complete with toilets.

EMPRESS MATILDA

SHE FOUGHT FOR HER RIGHT TO RULE



A 14th-century illustration of Empress Matilda. Her usurpation from the throne led to a tumultuous period in English history known as 'The Anarchy'

GETTY IMAGES X4, ALAMY X3

Empress Matilda, although never officially crowned queen of England, was a female ruler whose legacy certainly cannot be ignored.

The daughter of Henry I, Matilda's early life, from the age of eight, was spent in Germany receiving an education in preparation for her marriage to Holy Roman Emperor Henry V. She was to become a prominent figure there during her husband's reign, but when the emperor died in 1125, Matilda had no children and no reason to stay, and so returned to her native England.

Ironically, the untimely death of the emperor spelled a new opportunity for Matilda's father. After her brother William drowned in 1120, England was left without an heir. But with Matilda's return, Henry I now had a legitimate child he could name as successor. In 1127, an oath was sworn by the leading men of the kingdom to recognise Matilda as England's future queen. The king also arranged for Matilda to marry Geoffrey, the soon-to-be count of Anjou, to cement an Anglo-Angevin alliance.

Henry I's eventual death in 1135 should have marked the rule of England's first queen regnant, but Matilda was usurped by her cousin, Stephen of Blois, beginning a civil war known as 'The Anarchy' – an accurate description of events.

Matilda first arrived back in England in 1139 to reclaim her crown, but 1141 would prove to be the pivotal year: the empress's forces won a key victory at Lincoln and captured Stephen on the battlefield, making it seem as though Matilda would win the war. Flushed with success, she made her way to London to assert herself as queen, adopting the title 'Lady of the English' until she could be crowned.

Although welcomed at first, relations soon broke down between the would-be queen and the Londoners, causing them to turn on her and side with Stephen's wife, Matilda of Boulogne (*see opposite page*). The empress was thus forced to flee to Winchester, where she was again besieged by Stephen's supporters.

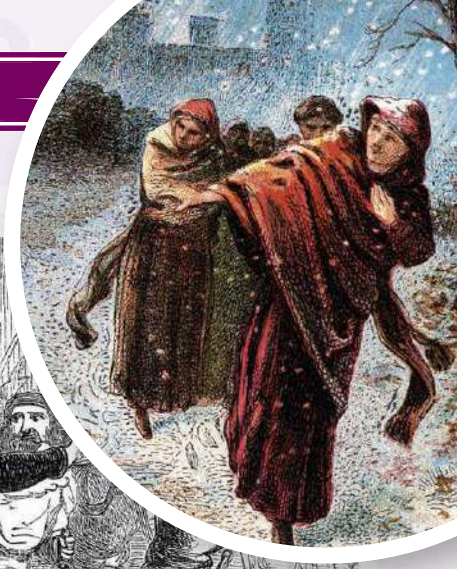
> **"The empress travelled to London, adopting the title 'Lady of the English' until she could be crowned"**

Ultimately, Matilda was never able to fully claim her rights as queen, but she did successfully secure her son's place as the next king, Henry II.

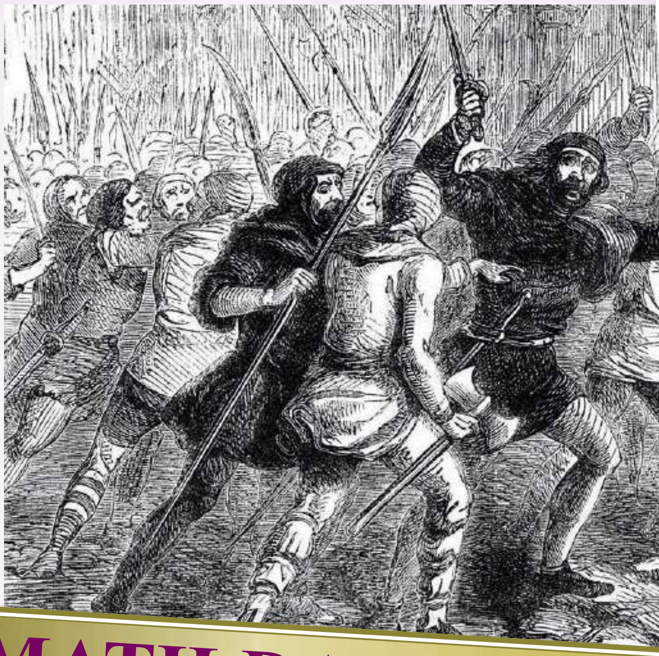
AN ENDURING LEGACY

While much of her life was consumed with civil war, Empress Matilda was still a considerable patron, particularly of Bec Abbey, where she was originally buried. In her later years, she also remained engaged in politics, acting as her son's lieutenant in Normandy, his advisor in governmental and military matters, and a mediator between Henry II and the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Becket, when they became locked in a now-infamous dispute.

When the empress died in 1167, she left most of her wealth to the Church. Although the legacy outlined by her epitaph ("great by birth, greater by marriage and greatest in her offspring") emphasises the men in her life, Matilda should be remembered as a ruler in her own right.



RIGHT: **Empress Matilda flees from Oxford in 1142, crossing the frozen river Thames**



BELOW: **King Stephen's supporters make their feelings against the empress known**

MATILDA OF BOULOGNE

A WOMAN WITH THE 'VALOUR OF A MAN'

Matilda of Boulogne was the last queen consort to hold this name, but her role in shaping English history was just as significant as that of her predecessors.

The only legitimate child of Eustace III of Boulogne and Mary of Scotland, Matilda was made the heir to her father's dynasty following his retirement to a monastery in 1125, becoming countess in her own right and a large landholder in both France and England. But when she married Stephen of Blois in that same year, she could never have known that in a mere 10 years' time she would become his queen consort, with influence stretching far beyond France.

During her husband's time on the English throne and the civil war that followed, Matilda was certainly no passive pawn. From December 1135 onwards, she played an important role in Stephen's government, witnessing his first charters as king, confirming the grants he made to religious houses in her lands, and refusing to shy away from military matters.

In 1138, when Empress Matilda's forces were ravaging the south-east coast of England, Queen Matilda led a force of Stephen's supporters to besiege the castle at Dover. She also called upon her kinsmen and allies across the English Channel in Boulogne to begin a blockade to starve the castle of supplies, securing its surrender as a result.

Matilda's greatest achievement as queen, however, was the impressive leadership that she displayed during the turmoil of 1141. After Empress Matilda refused to negotiate Stephen's release from imprisonment in London, the queen led her troops to the edge of the city, and – together with the locals – succeeded in forcing the empress out.

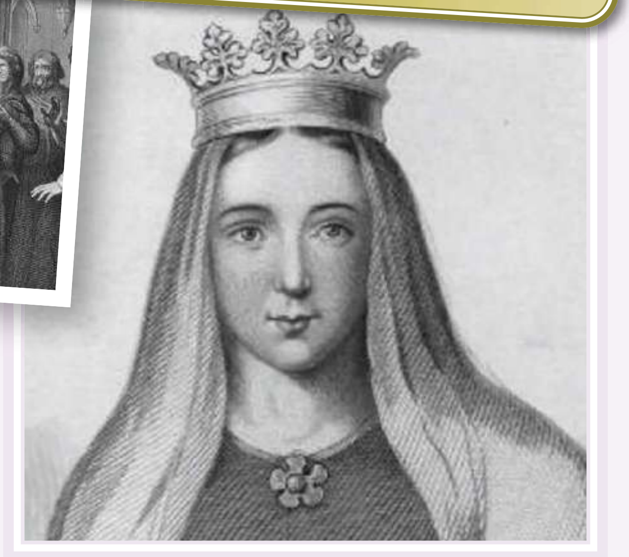
Notably, she then led the army at the Rout of Winchester, and along with William of Ypres (one of the most prominent commanders during Stephen's reign), besieged the empress and forced her to flee for a second time. Matilda was subsequently instrumental in securing the release of her husband, which she achieved at the end of 1141.

A WARRIOR QUEEN

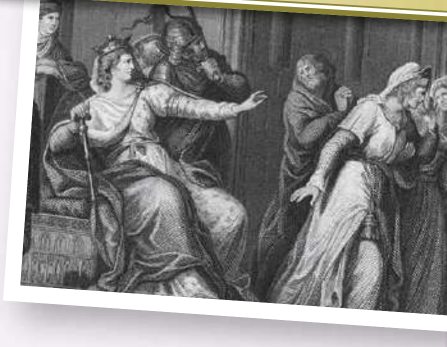
Like the empress, Matilda of Boulogne was a prolific patron of the Church, and was responsible for founding Faversham Abbey in 1148, where she and Stephen were later buried alongside their eldest son, Eustace.

But Queen Matilda's legacy should ultimately be centred around the events of 1141. Due to her impressive capabilities as a military leader, she would become known as a "woman of subtlety and a man's resolution" by her contemporaries.

Her achievements during her time as queen may have long been overshadowed by the empress who shared her name, but Matilda of Boulogne is certainly not a woman whose life should be forgotten by history. ⊙



ABOVE: **Matilda of Boulogne played a crucial role in supporting her husband on the throne**



INSET: **The queen's fierce rival, Empress Matilda, refuses to release Stephen from imprisonment**

CATHERINE CAPEL is a PhD student at the University of Winchester. She is a regular presenter at conferences and a contributor to *teamqueens.org*, an educational forum on queenship

EVERYTHING YOU WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT…

MEDIEVAL QUEENS AND IMAGE

Dr Elena Woodacre shines a spotlight on the ways in which female rulers chose to portray themselves – and how others perceived them

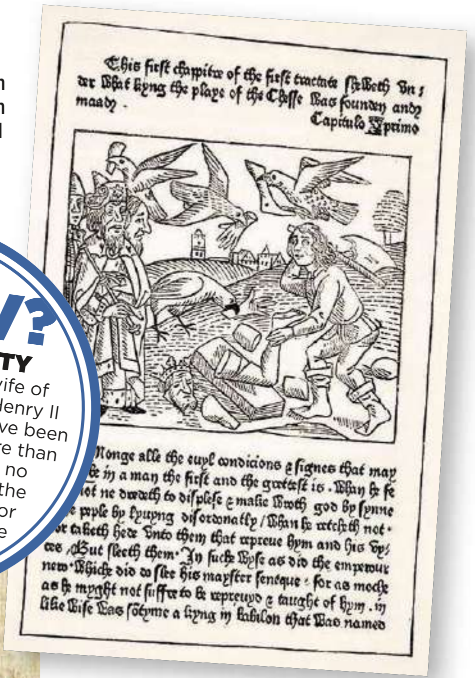
Q: What behaviours were expected of medieval queens?

A: I always summarise them as the four goods and the three Ps. Essentially, queens were expected to be the ultimate 'good woman' – a model of virtuous behaviour. They were expected to be good wives and mothers as well as good rulers, but they were also meant to be pious peacemakers and to look pretty.

That may seem like a rather trite description, but it really does sum up what was expected of medieval queens. Beauty was obviously a huge part of a queen's role, and they were expected to represent contemporary ideals. But queens were often described in idealistic terms and referred to as being beautiful or fair even if they weren't necessarily all that attractive. After all, no one wants to be the one to say that their queen isn't a looker, so it's hard to know how beautiful the woman was in absolute terms.

William Caxton, in his 15th-century book *The Game and Playe of Chesse* states that a queen "ought to be a fair lady sittynge in a chayer and crowned wyth a corone on her heed and cladd wyth a cloth of gold & a mantyll aboue furrid wyth ermynes". She should also, he writes, take care to be "chaste, wyse, of honest lyf, wel manerd".

The first English printer, William Caxton, discussed queenly beauty in one of his books



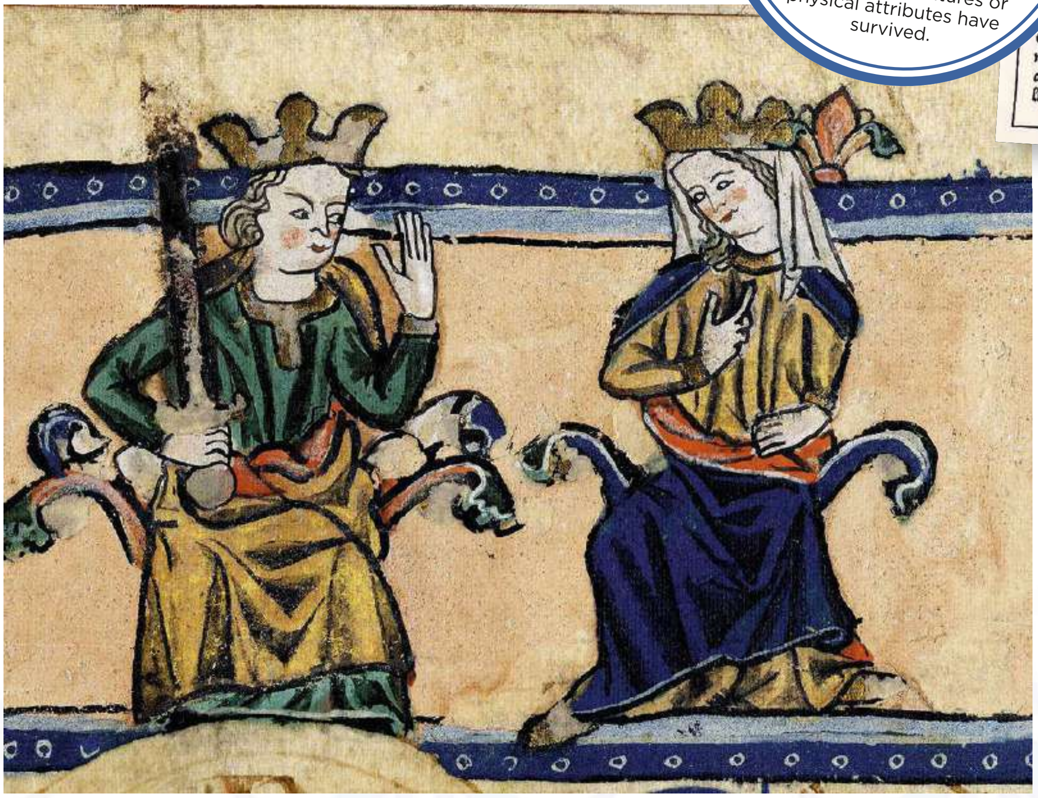
Thiſ firſt chappitre of the firſt tractate ſheweth vn-
der what kyng the playe of the Cheſſe was founden and
maad.
Capitulo Primo

Monge alle the euyl condicions & ſignes that may
be in a man the firſt and the grettest is. Whan he ſe
not ne dredeth to diſpleſe & make wroth god by ſynne
e peple by lyuyng diſordynatly / Whan he retcheth not
or taketh hede vnto them that repreue hym and his vy-
ces, But ſleeth them. In ſuche wyſe as did the emperour
nero. Whiche did do ſlee his mayſter ſeneque, for as moche
as he myght not ſuffre to be repreuyd & taught of hym. In
like wiſe was ſomtyme a kyng in babilon that was named

DID YOU KNOW?

ELUSIVE BEAUTY

Eleanor of Aquitaine, wife of Louis VII of France and Henry II of England, was said to have been *perpulchra*, meaning "more than beautiful". Despite this, no reliable descriptions of the queen's facial features or physical attributes have survived.



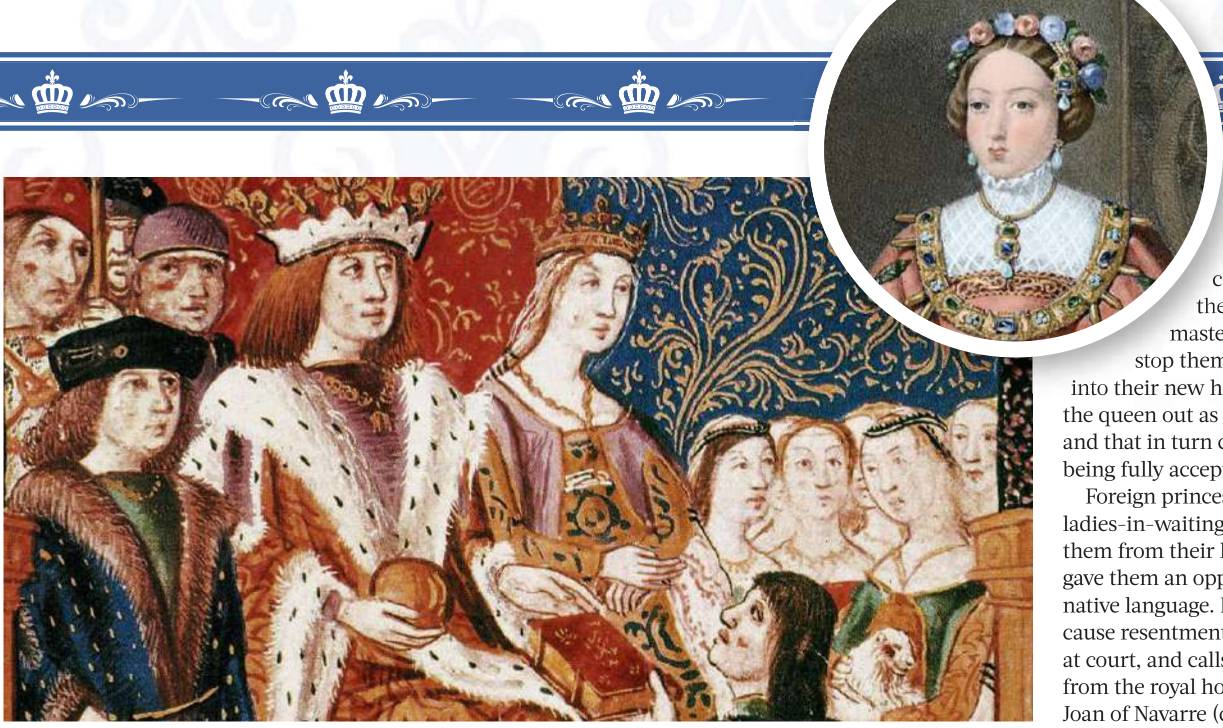
Alfonso X of Castile depicted alongside his queen consort, Violant of Aragon. The monarch specified his 'ideal' bride in his writings

ALAMY X5, GETTY IMAGES X1

It's interesting that beauty is the very first quality that Caxton names in his text. And we can see this in other sources of the medieval era, such as the Welsh Triads [manuscripts that preserved fragments of Welsh folklore, mythology and history].

Similarly, during the 13th century, Alfonso X of Castile compiled *Las Siete Partidas*, a code of law for the kingdom. Within it, he writes about the qualities that kings should look for in a bride, stating that the more beautiful the queen is, the more the king will love her and the more handsome their children will be.

So it's really interesting, again, seeing how these ideals of queenship were tied together – Alfonso was basically equating the idea that a beautiful woman will make a good wife and a good mother,



MAIN: **Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile, whose only surviving son married Margaret of Austria after her engagement to Charles VIII of France collapsed** INSET: **A portrait of Maria Manuela of Portugal, whose mother equipped her with a guide to queenship**

which takes us back full circle to those expectations of medieval queens.

Q: Who created the blueprint of what a medieval queen should be and how she should behave?

A: It came from many different places. One source was the so-called 'Mirror for Princes' genre of advice literature, which counselled on how to be a good monarch and how rulers should behave.

Within this, there was literature specifically aimed at princesses and queens. For instance, Joan I of Navarre's confessor, Durand de Champagne, wrote a text named *Speculum Dominarum* ('Mirror for Ladies') which advised Joan on how to be a good queen to her husband, Philip IV of France.

Likewise, during the 16th century, Catherine of Austria wrote a type of manual for her daughter, Maria Manuela, when the latter was leaving to marry her cousin Phillip II of Spain. In it, Catalina instructed her daughter to model herself on her future mother-in-law, Isabella of Portugal, who was, in Catalina's eyes, a perfect queen. So there were official, published guides, but often informal guides as well.

There were also texts that addressed the conduct of women more generally. Italian-French author Christine de Pizan's book, *The Treasure of the City of Ladies* – dedicated to Margaret of Burgundy – aimed to instruct women of all classes on how they should present themselves.

It's important to add that this preoccupation with 'queenly' behaviour wasn't merely a European phenomenon. In China, biographies of ancient queens provided examples of rulers whose behaviour was to be modelled, as well as those deemed to be a bad influence.

> "Wedding plans changed as politics changed, and princesses could be re-betrothed elsewhere"

Q: What language did foreign queens speak at the English court? Were they expected to be fluent in English?

Many medieval queens, obviously, were foreign princesses, so they had to learn the language of the new court they were moving to. And this could be a real issue for them. If they couldn't master the language, it could stop them from fully integrating into their new home. It could also mark the queen out as being foreign or 'other', and that in turn could prevent her from being fully accepted by her subjects.

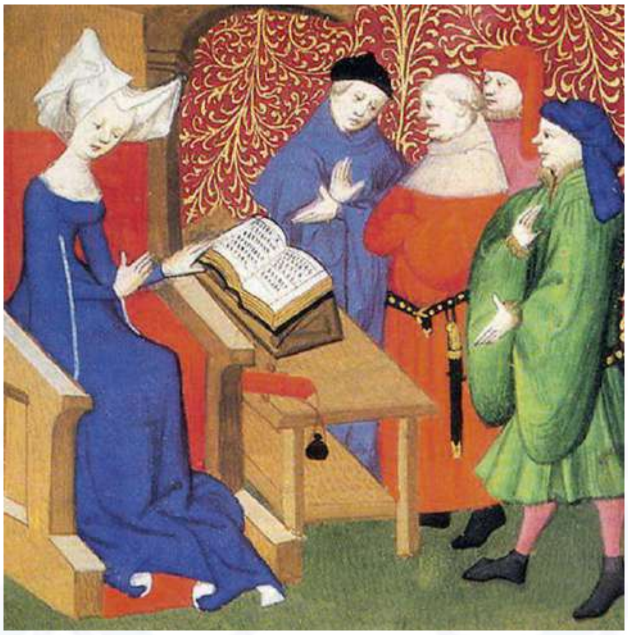
Foreign princesses often brought ladies-in-waiting and servants with them from their home country, which gave them an opportunity to speak their native language. But this could also cause resentment and even xenophobia at court, and calls to expel foreigners from the royal household were common. Joan of Navarre (consort of Henry IV of England), for example, had four different calls to purge her households of foreigners: in 1404, 1406, 1416 and 1426.

Some princesses learned the language of the court they would eventually rule before their marriage, and there are examples of women who were sent to their betrothed's court as children so that they could be educated there. This allowed them to pick up the language, as well as learn court protocols and customs, which again, foreign queens needed to adjust to.

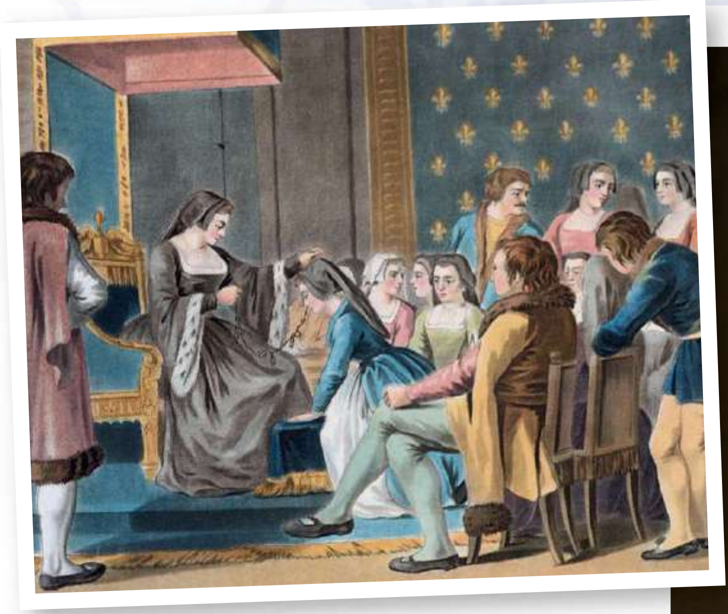
The problem with this, though, is that royal wedding plans often changed as politics changed – engagements could be broken off and princesses could be re-betrothed elsewhere. A great example of this strategy backfiring is with Margaret of Austria. Margaret was betrothed to Charles VIII at the age of three and grew up in the late medieval French court, receiving an excellent education and preparation for her future role as queen of France – she was even referred to as *la petite reine* ('the little queen').

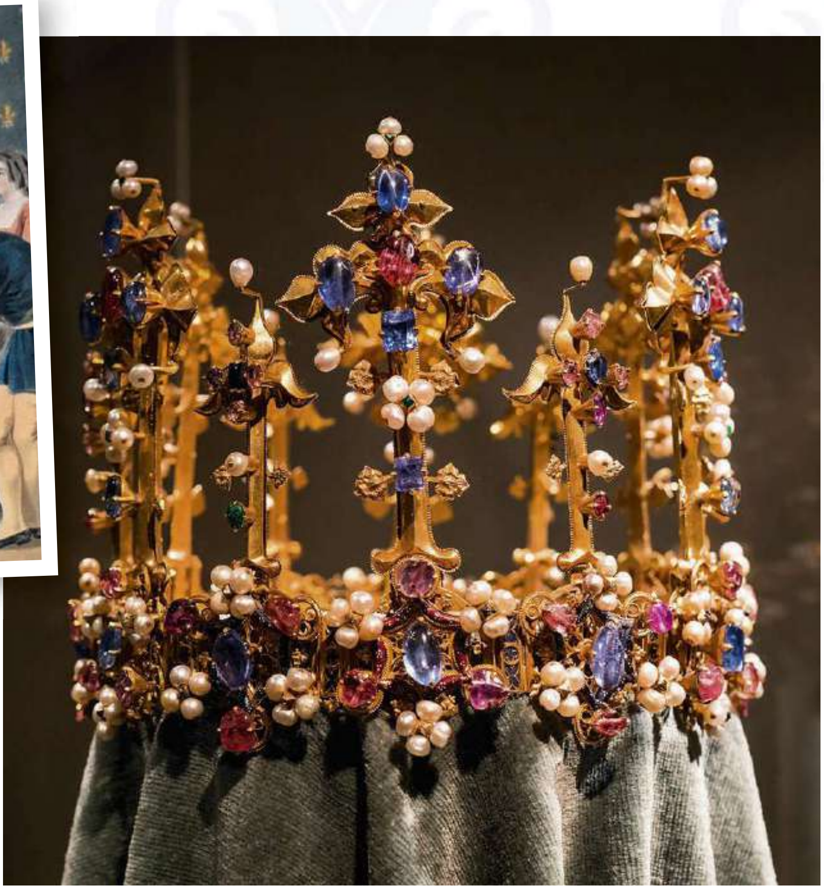
In 1491, however, Charles broke off their engagement and married Margaret's former stepmother, Anne, Duchess of Brittany; Margaret was sent back home and was ultimately married to John, Prince of Asturias – the only surviving son of Ferdinand and Isabella. So all that time spent learning the French language and customs went out of the window, and Margaret had to quickly learn Castilian.

Some court languages were used in multiple places. Going back to Henry IV's queen, Joan of Navarre, she most likely learned French as a child, and we know for sure that she would have spoken French at the Breton court during her first marriage to the Duke of Brittany. So, when she came to England in 1403, Joan likely kept speaking French. At this time it was a kind of *lingua franca* and, even though English was starting to be used more, a lot of the documents of the time were written in Latin or French. I'm ▶



Author Christine de Pizan offered advice on etiquette to men, as well as women





ABOVE: **An 18th-century image showing Anne of Brittany bestowing another woman with an order of chivalry**

RIGHT: **The crown that Henry IV gave his daughter, Blanche, when she wed Louis III, Elector Palatine**

ALAMY X1, SHUTTERSTOCK X1, GETTY IMAGES X1

◀ not sure if Joan ever mastered, or even needed to master, English; she lived in England for 34 years, but I wouldn't be surprised if she had spoken French the whole time.

Q: What do we know about the day-to-day lives of medieval queens?

A: We can gain a lot of information from economic records; household accounts are incredibly helpful in so many ways and can help us understand the everyday lives of medieval queens. One of the things that's frustrating, at least for English queens, is that we don't have a full set of accounts, so we can't trace their lives year by year or day by day. But from the accounts that do survive, we get a really good idea of the types of things being bought in for the household, the kinds of supplies that were coming in, and so on.

Household accounts can also reveal some of the things that queens ate, or at least what they liked to eat. This information also comes from records of food gifts – a popular type of present in the Middle Ages. If we look at the personal accounts of Elizabeth of York, we can see that on a particular day in 1502, 20 pence was paid to a servant who had brought a present of cakes, apples and cherries to the queen at Windsor. Apples actually occur frequently as gifts, which might indicate that people liked apples, or that perhaps the queen liked apples – giving the queen something she liked was always a good way to curry favour.

There's also an example of a servant who was paid three shillings and four pence for pomegranates and apples that were given to the queen. Another, a poor woman, brought a gift of apples from Hounslow to the queen at Richmond and was given 20 pence for that. Another day, Lady Hungerford is recorded as having sent the queen a present of apples as well. So we can see from the poorest to the richest, many people were sending apples to Elizabeth of York.

> "The queen's 'bling' not only demonstrated her own power and wealth, but also that of her husband"

If we look at household and wardrobe accounts, we can see records of the clothing that was purchased and owned by queens. Sometimes there's a lot of description of these clothes, and other times there are lists of the types of cloth, furs and trimmings that had been bought.

Something else we know was really important to medieval queens were jewels. The historian Nicola Tallis, for instance, has done a lot of fantastic research into the jewel collections of late medieval and early Tudor queens. One of the things she has looked at is how important it was for queens to wear jewels as a way to project their majesty and status. The queen's 'bling' not only demonstrated her own power and wealth, but that of her husband and even that of the realm itself.

Jewels were also really important in terms of the messages they conveyed. When Joan of Navarre formally married Henry IV in 1403, one of the items she was gifted was a massive collar or necklace, which cost 500 marks – more than £300. It wasn't just the gold and the jewels on the collar that were important, it was the collar's design of interlinked 'S' symbols – a motif of great significance to the Lancastrians – which matched the king's own collar. The effigy of Joan on her tomb in Canterbury Cathedral, where she is buried next to her husband, shows the queen wearing her 'S' collar.

Henry also gave Joan a crown worth a £1,313, six shillings, eight pence, which, based on the description of it in the treasury accounts, we know boasted several huge emeralds, as well as sapphires, rubies, diamonds and pearls. It was the same crown that Anne of Bohemia had worn when she married Richard II in 1382, so again, it's a really symbolic piece.

Wearing Anne of Bohemia's crown tied Joan into that tradition of previous reigns. Unfortunately, this crown doesn't survive, but another fantastic example of royal jewellery does, and that's the extraordinary crown that Henry gifted to his daughter, Blanche (by his first wife Mary de Bohun), when she wed Louis III, Elector Palatine, in 1402.

IN PROFILE

ISABELLA OF FRANCE

THE MASTER POLITICIAN

Isabella of France is often remembered for her role in the usurpation of her husband, Edward II, thus gaining her the nickname 'She-Wolf of France'. However, Isabella's tenure as consort was incredibly eventful. She was the daughter, sister, wife, and mother of kings, and her close connection to the crowns of both England and France enabled her to play the role of intercessor and ambassador on numerous occasions.

Born in Paris to Philip IV of France and Joan I of Navarre, Isabella married Edward II in January 1308, when she was around the age of 12. The marriage was part of the Treaty of Montreuil, in which England and France agreed to peace after years of continuous fighting.

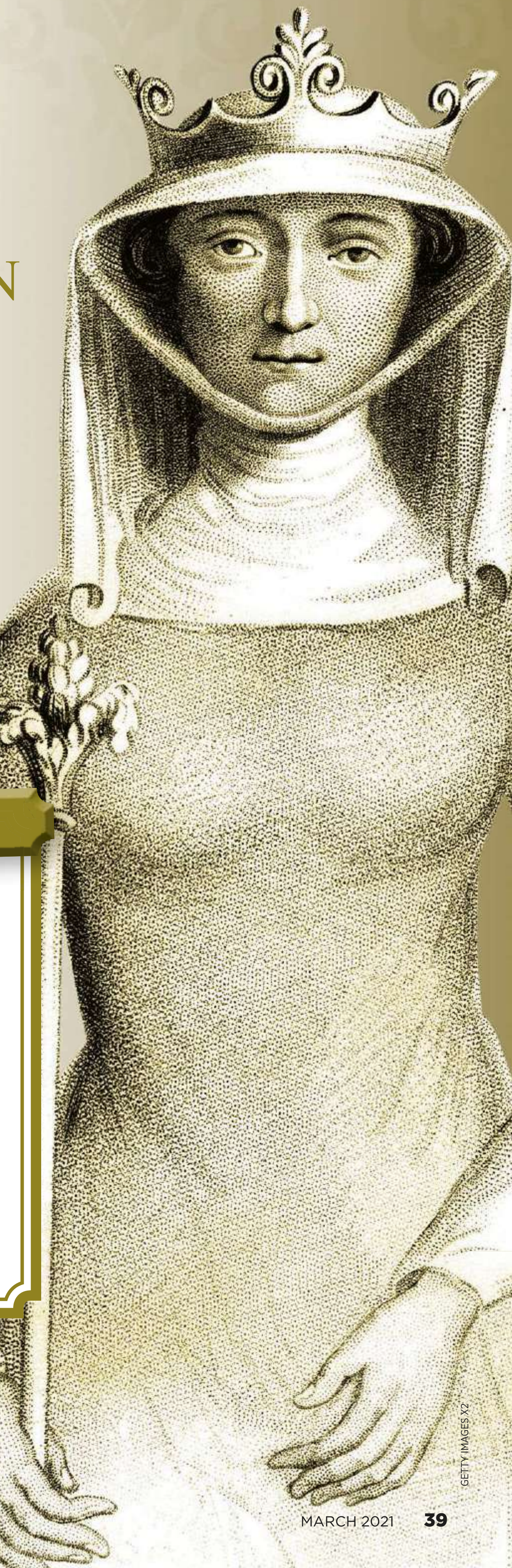
Despite rumours of the king's infidelity with his so-called 'favourites', Edward and Isabella's marriage was not a completely unhappy one and resulted in four children. Edward clearly trusted his wife: she played an important role in English political events, aiding him in both the baronial revolt of 1312 and in foreign affairs. Isabella visited France as an English ambassador in 1313, 1320 and 1325, aiding negotiations with her father and two of her three brothers.

However, after those final negotiations were completed, Isabella refused to return to England while her husband favoured the unpopular Hugh Despenser the Younger. In September 1326, Isabella had garnered enough support to invade England, successfully dethroning her husband and crowning her young son, Edward III, by January 1327. Isabella ruled through Edward for the next three years, until she was eventually overthrown by him in late 1330.

From 1331 onwards, Isabella's life was much quieter. Although she stopped playing a decisive role in Edward III's reign, she remained a figure of interest among the political movements between England and France. It was through Isabella's connection to the French throne, as the only surviving child of Philip IV, that Edward III was able to claim his right to the crown of France, which sparked the conflict known as the Hundred Years' War.

Isabella died in 1358 and was buried at Greyfriars, in Newgate – a church of which she was a patron. Although the church no longer stands today, her internment there is commemorated with the road name 'Queen Isabella Way'.

Overall, Isabella of France was a rare example of a medieval queen who politically acted in support of her husband, yet later worked to dethrone him. ⊙



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FACT FILE

BORN: 1295

DIED: 22 August 1358

QUEEN FROM: 25 January 1308 until 25 January 1327

PARENTS: Philip IV of France and Joan I of Navarre

CHILDREN: Edward III of England; John of Eltham, Earl of Cornwall; Eleanor of Woodstock; Joan of the Tower

REMEMBERED FOR: Deposing her husband, Edward II, and installing their son on the throne in his place. A skilled diplomat, she also aided negotiations between England and France.

KATIA WRIGHT is a PhD student at the University of Winchester, where her doctoral research focuses on England's 14th-century queens and their roles as landowners. She has worked on several joint projects, including co-editing a special edition of the *Royal Studies Journal*

9 MEDIEVAL QUEENS

YOU (PROBABLY) HAVEN'T HEARD OF

We take a look at some of the less-familiar female rulers and monarchs from the medieval period…

1 TAMAR OF GEORGIA

c1160–1209/13

Tamar (known as 'the Great') was the first woman to rule the Kingdom of Georgia in her own right. The daughter of George III of Georgia, Tamar began co-ruling with her father when she turned 18 – an act intended to legitimise her claim to the throne after his death.

However, when George died in 1184, the country's noblemen (deeply opposed to the idea of a woman ruling on her own), forced Tamar to marry the Rus' prince Yuri. He proved to be a troublesome spouse, and after managing to increase the number of loyal supporters in her court, Tamar eventually secured a divorce.

Yuri went on to launch two failed coups against his ex-wife, but both attempts were crushed with the help of David Sosland, a prince of Ossetia whom Tamar married on her own terms.

Under Tamar's rule – known as the 'Golden Age' – the kingdom of Georgia peaked in size and power, coming to dominate the Caucasus. The empire of Trebizond (located in modern Turkey) was also founded under Tamar's orders.

A statue of Queen Tamar in the town of Mestia, Georgia, where an airport is also named after her

ALAMY X5, GETTY IMAGES X1

2 ARWA OF YEMEN

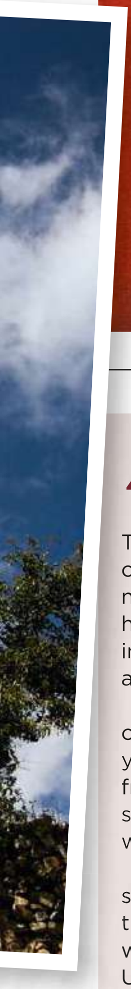
c1048–1137

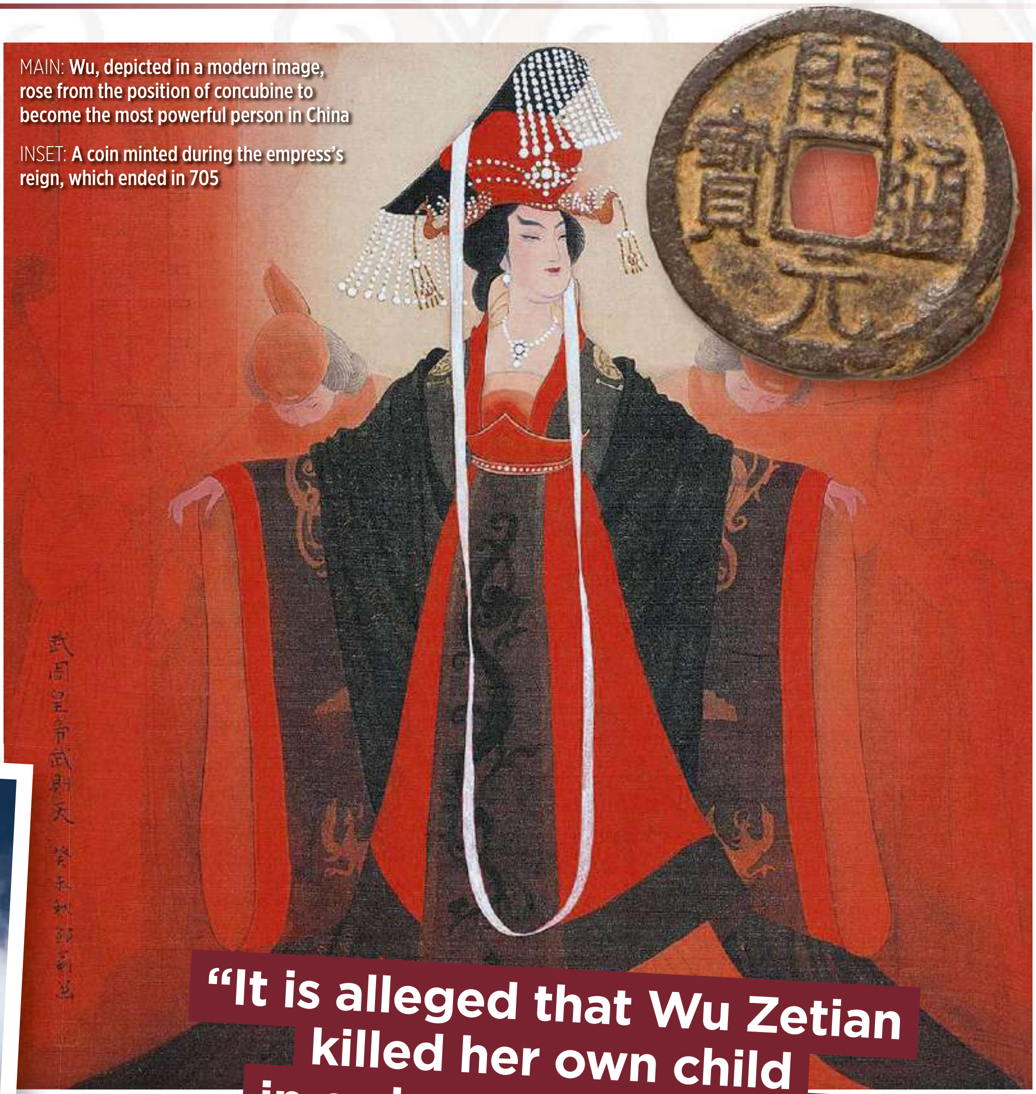
Orphaned as a child, Arwa al-Sulayhi was adopted by her uncle and aunt, the co-rulers of Yemen. When she was 17, Arwa married her cousin and heir to the throne, Ahmad al-Mukarram bin Ali bin Muhammad As Sulaihi. After her husband was paralysed and unable to rule, Arwa became the de facto ruler. Despite re-marrying after the death of her first husband, Arwa continued to rule alone.

During the course of her long reign, Arwa built mosques, roads and education centres, and focused her efforts on the welfare of her people. She was the first woman to be accorded the title of *hujja* in the Isma'ili branch of Shi'a Islam. The term, meaning 'proof of God', signified her as the closest living image of God's will.

Arwa and her mother-in-law, Asma bint Shihab, are rare examples of queens in the Muslim Arab world to have their names mentioned in the *khutbah* (a traditional religious sermon), formally acknowledging their sovereignty.

A minaret at the Queen Arwa Mosque in Jibla, Yemen – the long-serving ruler's burial place





MAIN: **Wu, depicted in a modern image, rose from the position of concubine to become the most powerful person in China**

INSET: **A coin minted during the empress's reign, which ended in 705**

> "It is alleged that Wu Zetian killed her own child in order to gain power"

3 WU ZETIAN

624–705

The only woman to rule China in her own right, Wu Zetian was not a woman to be crossed.

Raised in a wealthy family, Wu entered the household of Emperor Taizong as a concubine when she was about 14. Following Taizong's death in 649, Wu was sent to a Buddhist convent as tradition dictated, but promptly returned to the royal palace to serve as a concubine to the new emperor, Gaozong.

If some stories are to be believed, Wu Zetian could be very ruthless. When her baby daughter died in 654 (with evidence to suggest she had been strangled), Wu accused Gaozong's wife – Wang – of murder. Wang was deposed, and Wu became empress consort in her place. Despite this, it is alleged that Wu actually killed the child herself in order to gain power.

In 690, seven years after Gaozong's death, Wu made herself empress regnant – usurping her son, Ruizong – and went on to found the Zhou dynasty, named after an earlier civilisation from which Wu believed she was descended.

Although Wu is thought to have murdered many opponents during her 15-year reign (including her own siblings), she was a popular ruler and raised living standards for many.

4 MELISENDE OF JERUSALEM

1105–61

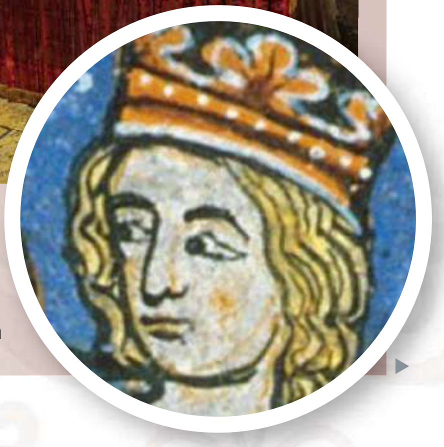
The eldest daughter of King Baldwin II of Jerusalem and Morphia of Melitene, Melisende grew up in the Holy Land during a time of near-constant war. As she had no brothers, Melisende was named heir-presumptive when her father came to the throne of Jerusalem in 1118, and she went on to play an active role in the kingdom's administration for the duration of her father's reign.

In 1129, Melisende married the Frankish commander Fulk V, Count of Anjou and Maine, and they became joint rulers of Jerusalem two years later following Baldwin's death. Fulk attempted to seize power from his wife and they went to war in 1134, but Melisende's diplomatic skills, loyal subjects and talented commanders ensured that the coup was crushed and the couple eventually reconciled.

When Fulk died in 1143, Melisende became regent for her teenage son, Baldwin III. Despite Baldwin demanding sole power when he turned 23, the realm was divided by the *Haute Cour* (High Court), with Melisende ruling the south and Baldwin the northern portion. Unhappy with the arrangement, Baldwin III launched an attack on his mother. Peace was eventually reached and Melisende retired from her duties, although in 1157 she presided over a council of regency when Baldwin went on campaign.

Queen Melisende was a great patron of the arts, and commissioned the famous 'Melisende Psalter' – an elaborately decorated copy of the Book of Psalms from the Bible's Old Testament.

ABOVE: **The site of Melisende's tomb – now a chapel for the parents of the Virgin Mary**



RIGHT: **Detail from a 13th-century illustration of the queen's coronation**

5 RAZIA SULTAN

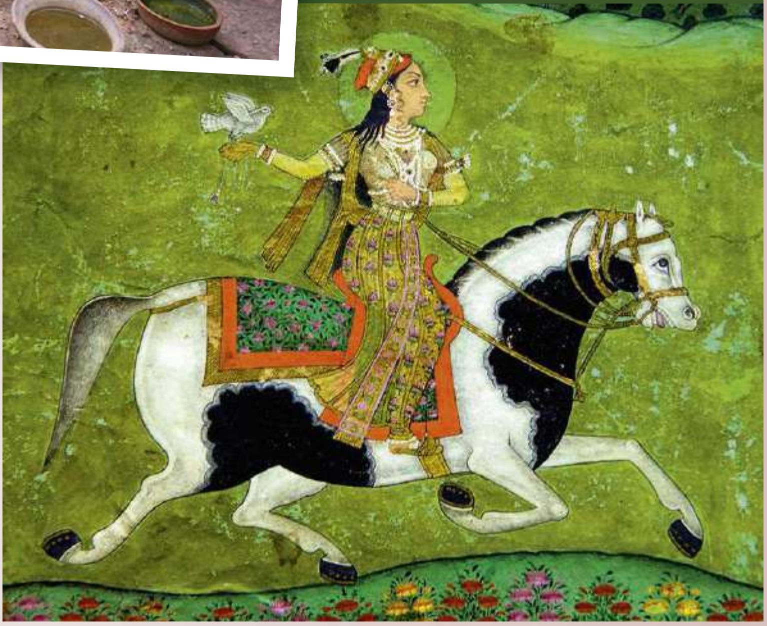
?–1240

The eldest daughter of Iltutmish, Sultan of Delhi, Razia defied convention to become the first female Muslim ruler on the whole of the Indian subcontinent. Under her father's guidance, Razia became well-educated in politics, as well as martial arts and archery.

When Iltutmish died in 1236, the Muslim nobility initially refused to accept Razia's sovereignty, so her half-brother – Ruknuddin Firuz – was placed on the throne instead. However, he was killed six months later, and in November 1236, Razia was finally given her right to rule.

Calling herself the 'Queen of the Times', Razia wore men's clothes, issued her own coins, established schools, and attempted to expand her territory. But her reign was cut short in 1240 when she was usurped by another half-brother – Muizuddin Bahram – and placed under arrest.

In a strange turn of events, the Governor of Bhatinda (who had played a major role in the coup) fell in love with Razia and ended up marrying her the same year. Determined to take back the throne, the couple planned a siege of Delhi, but their forces were defeated and they were both killed.



LEFT: **The ruins of Razia's mausoleum in Old Delhi – a humble final resting place for a once-powerful ruler**

BELOW: **An 18th-century image of Razia, who remains the only Muslim woman to have sat on Delhi's throne**

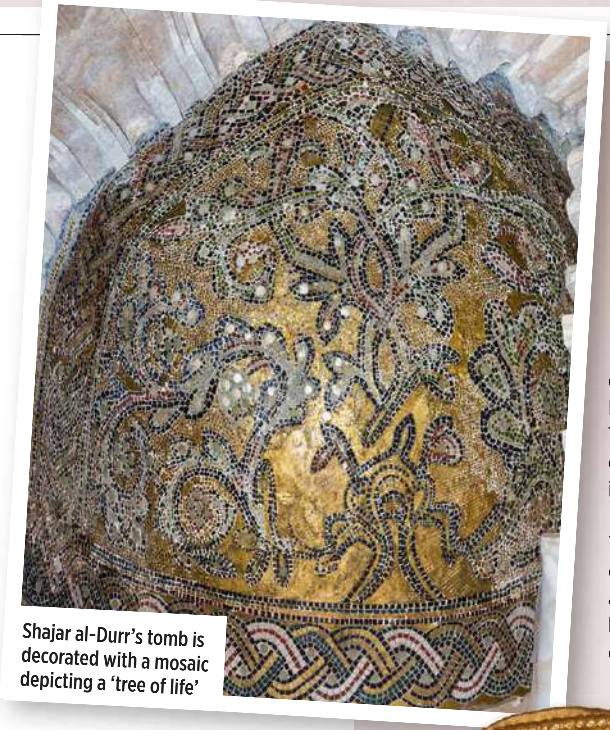
6 SHAJAR AL-DURR OF EGYPT

d1257

Little is known about the early life of Shajar al-Durr except that she was a child slave, bought for the harem of As-Salih Ayyub – the future Sultan of Egypt. As-Salih Ayyub – the last major sultan of the Ayyubid dynasty – eventually married Shajar and she acted as regent while he fought in Damascus.

In 1249, Shajar's husband died, but as Louis IX of France was attacking Egypt as part of the Seventh Crusade, Shajar kept his death a secret with the help of commanders from the military. Together with her stepson, Turanshah, she defended Cairo against the crusaders and captured the French king, holding him ransom and forcing him to surrender the city of Damietta.

In 1250, Turanshah was assassinated and Shajar briefly succeeded him as sultan of Egypt. However, the Caliph did not recognise Shajar as being a legitimate sovereign and she was forced to abdicate in favour of her second husband, Izz al-din Aybak. Despite this setback, Shajar still wielded great power, and had Aybak killed when he attempted to take another wife. Shajar, too, was murdered in 1257, on the orders of Aybak's son.



Shajar al-Durr's tomb is decorated with a mosaic depicting a 'tree of life'

ALAMY X5, GETTY IMAGES X2

7 IRENE OF BYZANTIUM

c752–803

Born in Athens to the noble Sarantapechos family, Irene was first married to the Byzantine emperor, Leo IV. When he died in 780, she became co-emperor with her 10-year-old son, Constantine VI.

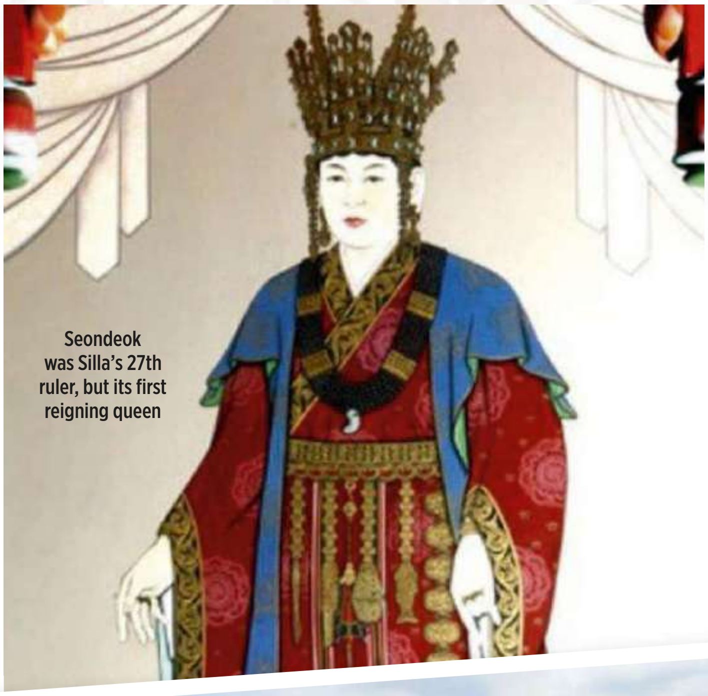
However, mere weeks after her husband's death, Irene faced an unsuccessful plot to install Leo's half-brother, Nikephoros, on the throne. Then, in 790, the young Constantine led his own coup in order to gain sole power, which resulted in Irene's banishment from court.

Irene was eventually restored as co-ruler in 792, and in 797 – in league with members of the court and clergy – Irene organised a conspiracy against Constantine. Captured by his own men, his eyes were gouged out and he died several days later.

For the next five years, Irene ruled Byzantium alone, forging good relations with the Western emperor, Charlemagne. She also restored previously banned religious icons to the Orthodox church.

In 802, Irene was deposed by her finance minister and exiled to the island of Lesbos, where she died a year later.

The face of Irene of Byzantium, shown on a golden coin known as a *solidus*



Seondeok was Silla's 27th ruler, but its first reigning queen

8

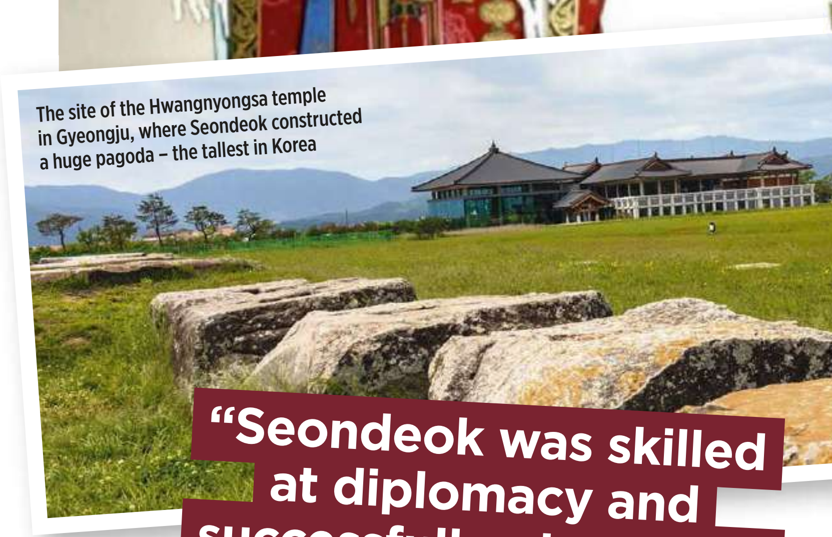
SEONDEOK OF SILLA

c600–47

Seondeok was the first reigning queen of Silla – one of the three historic kingdoms of Korea. The eldest daughter of King Jinpyeong, Seondeok was skilled at diplomacy and successfully pitted her enemies against each other. Notably, she allied with the kingdom of Gogureyo against the kingdom of Baekje (the two other kingdoms of Korea), before then launching an attack on Goguryeo with the help of China's Tang dynasty.

Under Seondeok's rule, Silla came to dominate the whole of the Korean peninsula, which became fully unified a few decades after her death. Buddhism also flourished during Seondeok's time on the throne and many temples were built.

Interestingly, Seondeok's reign coincided with the construction of the famous *Cheomseongdae* ('star-gazing tower') in Gyeongju – the first observatory in the Far East – which still stands in modern-day South Korea.



The site of the Hwangnyongsa temple in Gyeongju, where Seondeok constructed a huge pagoda – the tallest in Korea

> **"Seondeok was skilled at diplomacy and successfully played her enemies against each other"**

9

URRACA OF LEÓN-CASTILE

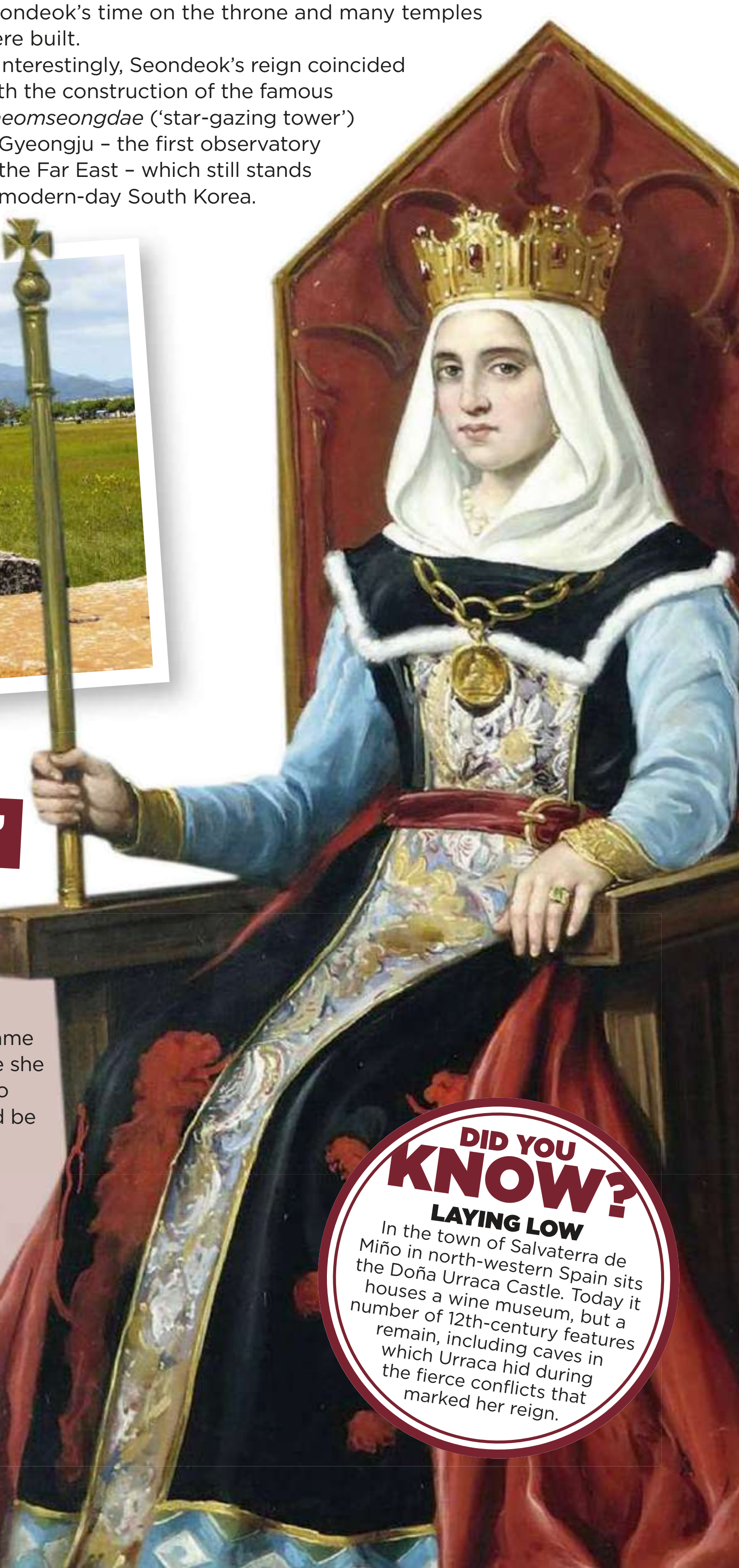
c1079–1126

The daughter of King Alfonso VI of León and Castile, Urraca (*right*) became her father's heir when her brother was killed in battle in 1108. By the time she succeeded her father the following year, Urraca was already betrothed to Alfonso I, king of Aragon and Navarre. The royal court believed he would be an ideal match, and that the union would bring stability to Spain.

The prediction could not have been more wrong. Urraca and Alfonso proved a disastrous pairing, leading to years of chaos both personally and politically. The king and queen frequently quarrelled, and the fact that they were co-rulers in each other's lands sparked outbreaks of civil war. After becoming estranged and engaging in battles over territory, their marriage was finally annulled in 1115.

Urraca eventually reclaimed the lands she had lost over the course of her marriage, and her son – King Alfonso VII (the product of an earlier marriage to Raymond of Burgundy) – went on on to inherit a realm finally at peace.

WORDS: EMMA SLATTERY WILLIAMS



DID YOU KNOW?

LAYING LOW

In the town of Salvaterra de Miño in north-western Spain sits the Doña Urraca Castle. Today it houses a wine museum, but a number of 12th-century features remain, including caves in which Urraca hid during the fierce conflicts that marked her reign.

EVERYTHING YOU WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT...

MEDIEVAL QUEENS AND FAMILY

Dr Elena Woodacre considers the importance of relationships to queenship – from the threat of mistresses and mothers-in-law to power-hungry consorts and the need to continue the dynasty

Q: How important was motherhood for a medieval queen?

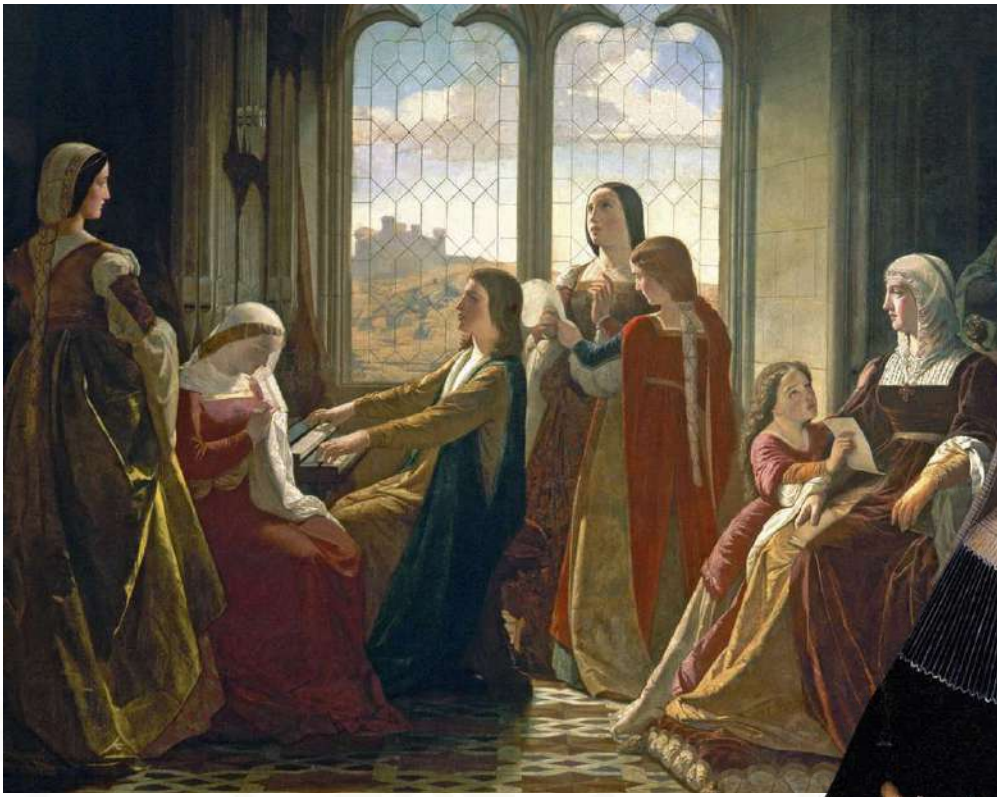
A: Maternity was absolutely central to queenship, and not just in the Middle Ages. Queens were under a great deal of pressure to produce children because dynastic continuity and dynastic survival were crucial. But even saying that, women like Anne of Bohemia, who didn't have any children, could still be really effective queens in other ways.

Queens obviously had huge responsibilities. They were running their households, their lands, engaged in the political and ceremonial aspects of royal life, and they often had to be on the move with their husbands. All of this meant that they weren't always in the same place as their children.

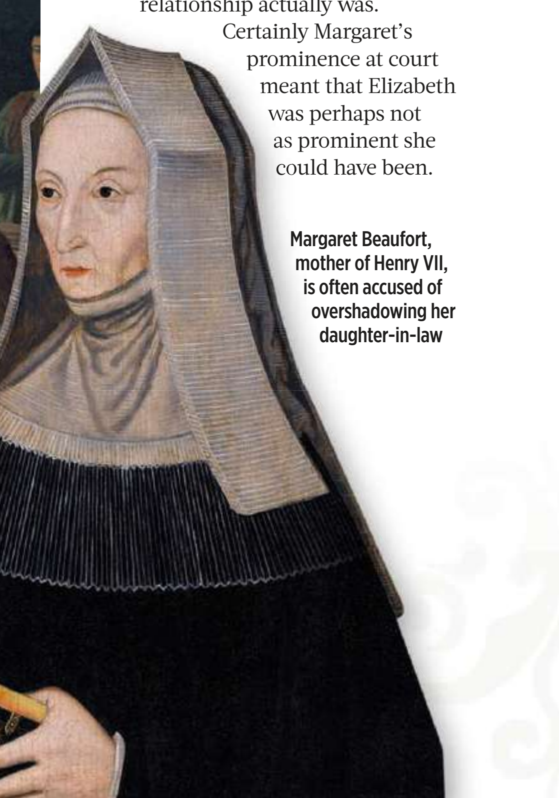
Royal children were often set up in miniature royal households of their own, attended to by a team of servants – nurses, governesses, tutors, even their own laundresses. But that's not to say that queens had no input into their children's lives. Many queens were very involved in their children's education, for example. Isabella of Castile and her own daughter, Catherine of Aragon, both had significant control and direction over their children's education. And even if they weren't with them every day, we know that many queens did have close and sometimes rather complicated relationships with their children. Obviously, the mother-child relationship could be more complicated if the queen were involved in co-rulership, perhaps as a regent.

Q: How much influence could a king's mother have over a queen?

A: One of the most famous mother-in-laws of the medieval period is probably Margaret Beaufort, mother of Henry VII, and she has often been accused of overshadowing her daughter-in-law Elizabeth of York. But then there's been a lot of discussion recently about how competitive or cooperative their relationship actually was. Certainly Margaret's prominence at court meant that Elizabeth was perhaps not as prominent she could have been.



Many queens, including Catherine of Aragon, played an active role in their childrens' education



Margaret Beaufort, mother of Henry VII, is often accused of overshadowing her daughter-in-law

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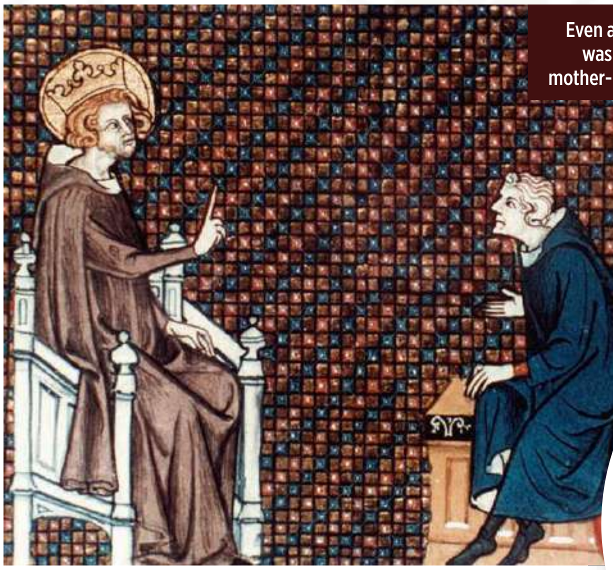
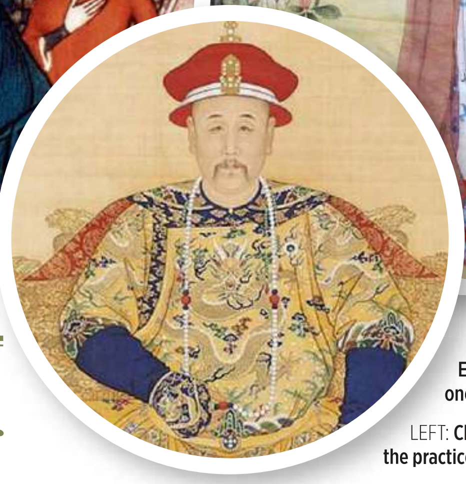
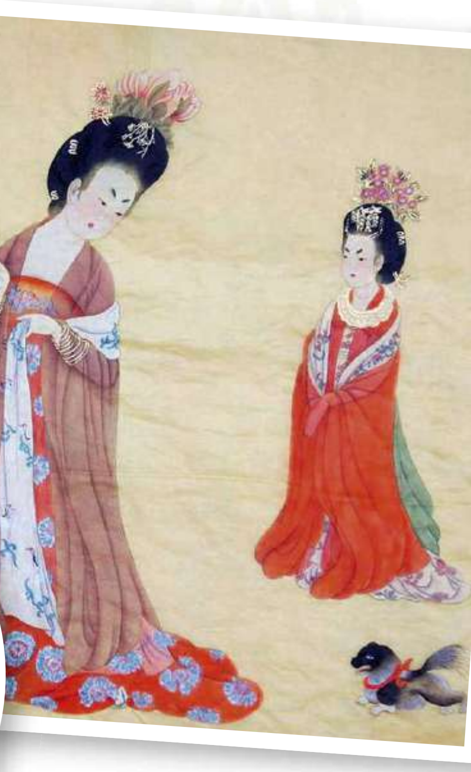


Even as king, Louis IX of France was heavily influenced by his mother-in-law, Blanche of Castile





ABOVE: **Yang Yuhuan, beloved consort of Emperor Xuanzong of Tang, was famous as one of the Four Beauties of ancient China**

LEFT: **Chinese emperor Yongzheng established the practice of choosing a successor secretly**

> “In a polygamous court there could be thousands of women who were sexually available to the king”

Blanche of Castile was another very dominant mother-in-law – even after she stepped back from formally being regent, she was still an incredibly powerful presence at court and very influential with Louis IX. His wife, Margaret of Provence, was totally overshadowed by her mother in law, and very unhappily so. So, yes, there are plenty of examples of powerful mothers who don’t really want to make room for the next generation.

Q: Could a mistress pose any real threat to a queen?

A: Dynastic marriages were usually made for political reasons rather than affairs of the heart, but we do see mistresses becoming really significant during the medieval period, particularly in France, where kings had an official royal mistress. That official role began in the Middle Ages with Agnès Sorel, who essentially took over the queen’s position at court. She had such standing in the French court that many began to resent her influence over Charles VII, particularly the Dauphin who felt that his mother, Marie of Anjou, was being undermined by the prominence of Sorel and the hold she had over the king.

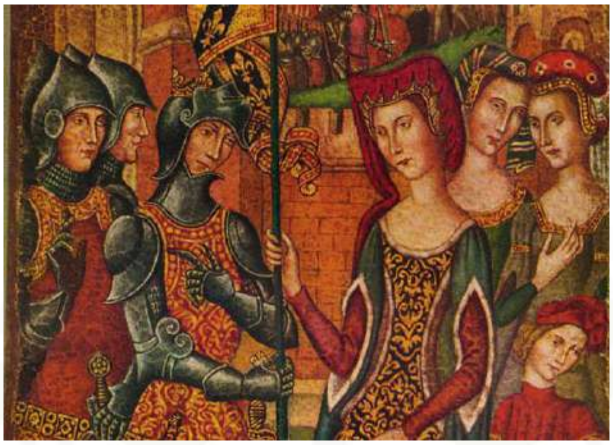
Certainly in a polygamous court context, there was a huge amount of competition at court because there could be hundreds, even thousands in some cases, of women who were sexually available to the king, and all competing for his attention and wanting to be the mother of the heir.

One of the expectations of Chinese empresses was that they would create peace in the inner palace, and they were not supposed to feel jealousy towards the emperor’s other women. They were expected to be a model example to other women; acting like a jealous wife was certainly not seen as a demonstration of good behaviour. It was allowed – and expected – for a king to have mistresses, but for a queen, completely the opposite because she was the dynastic progenitor.

Q: How did choosing an heir work in polygamous courts?

A: There were lots of different options. Some did have a tendency to favour the oldest son, but not in the strict sense that developed in medieval Europe, where male primogeniture became the norm. There were some very loose rules – and certainly in the Ottoman Empire, particularly in the late medieval period, there was a lot of fratricide. But there was more opportunity in a polygamist court for a ruler to select the person that he felt most able to do the job. And so that created more competition – if the heir was not necessarily the oldest son of the emperor and empress, then it was something of a free for all. It was Chinese emperor Yongzheng in the 18th century who eventually set up the rule of choosing a successor secretly: the successor’s name was placed in a box and opened after the emperor’s death.

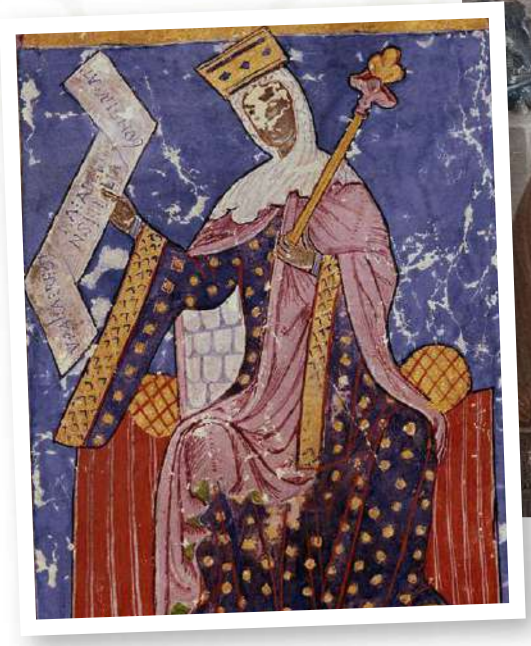
Agnès Sorel could be considered the first ‘official mistress’ of the French kings in the medieval era

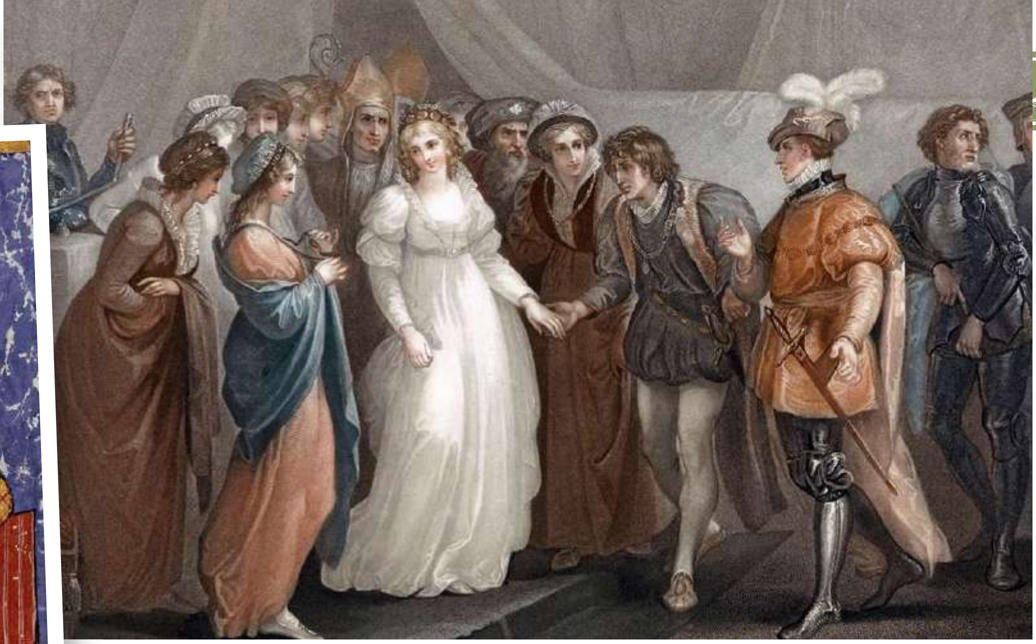


Q: Were queens always blamed for the absence of an heir?

A: A queen’s perceived failure to produce an heir could certainly threaten their position and even be grounds for divorce. Beatrice of Naples, who had no children by her first husband, Matthias I of Hungary and Croatia, was set aside by her second husband Vladislaus II of Hungary when their union also remained childless.

But a childless royal marriage wasn’t always deemed to be the queen’s fault. A really interesting case in the 15th century is that of Maria of Castile and Alfonso V of Aragon. Alfonso’s empire stretched from Spain to the Balearics and to Sicily, and then he gained Naples as well and spent a lot of time there. He left his wife to rule in Iberia and, obviously, she didn’t have a ▶





ABOVE: **Catherine of Valois is introduced to Henry V of England**

LEFT: **Urraca of León-Castile, who had a tempestuous relationship with her husband Alfonso I of Aragon and Navarre**

child. At one point Alfonso was told in no uncertain terms that if he didn't come back to Spain, there was no way the queen was going to get pregnant! So there was a recognition that everyone had to play their part and kings were expected to visit their wives regularly. But there tended to be more suspicion on a wife of being the cause of any reproductive problem.

Q: Are there many examples of royal couples who despised each other?

A: That's an interesting question, as it demonstrates the importance of a mutually acceptable political and personal royal partnership. A really good example of a royal marriage and power share going horribly wrong is Urraca, the reigning queen of León-Castile, who married Alfonso I, king of Aragon and Navarre in 1109.

The pair absolutely hated each other. There were allegations of homosexuality, of domestic abuse, infidelity and all sorts, so it was a terrible partnership. And not only did their marriage fall apart, but they actually ended up going to war against each other. Their union was the exact opposite of Ferdinand and Isabella, whose marriage some 360 years later brought Iberia together. Urraca and Alfonso drove Castile and Aragon into all-out war with each other.

Urraca did manage to hang onto her throne in Castile, despite people within her own country trying to undermine her and put her son on the throne. The marriage was eventually annulled by the Pope on the grounds of consanguinity – as they were second cousins – and a truce called, but the fact that Urraca was able to survive that war, survive the threats to her internally and externally and retain power until her death is pretty amazing.

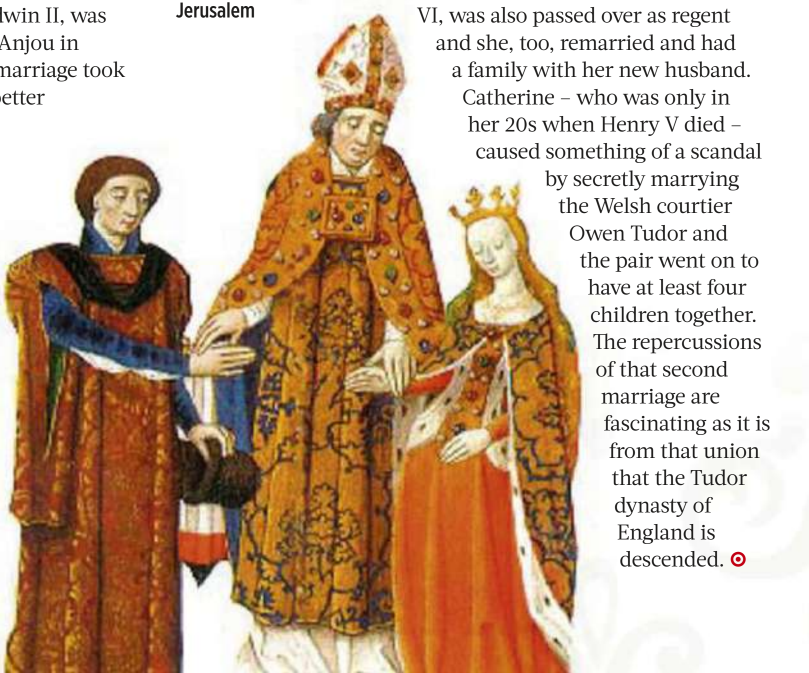
ALAMY X3, GETTY IMAGES X1

> "The role of king consort created real issues because it contravened medieval expectations of rulership"

Q: How much power could the king consort of a regnant queen hold, and could the power dynamic cause marital issues?

A: The role of king consort could create real issues because it contravened medieval expectations of rulership, as well as expectations of gender and matrimony. Some men found the role really difficult because they came to the marriage with the idea that they would be ruling. Melisende of Jerusalem, the eldest daughter of Baldwin II, was married to Fulk, Count of Anjou in 1129, and even before the marriage took place he was demanding better terms than that of a mere consort of the queen.

When the couple became joint rulers of Jerusalem after Baldwin's death in 1131, Fulk immediately started to exclude his wife and assume control of government. Eventually, Fulk was forced to acknowledge the fact that Melisende had a right to the throne and that she should have some share in the governance of the country, and the pair were reconciled.



Once wed, king consort Fulk of Anjou tried to usurp power from Melisende of Jerusalem

Q: What happened to queen consorts who weren't chosen as regent after a king's death?

The tradition of a regency was something that was really embedded in medieval France but not so much in England. But there are two really good examples of English queens who were bypassed as regent: Isabella of Angoulême, widow of King John, and Catherine Valois, widow of Henry V.

Isabella and John's eldest son, the future Henry III, was just nine when his father died, but Isabella was not deemed to be regent material. She returned to France less than a year after her young son had been crowned leaving him in the care of William Marshal, 1st Earl of Pembroke and also leaving her other four children in England. Isabella married again, in 1220, and had another nine children by her new husband Hugh X of Lusignan (who was originally betrothed to Isabella and John's eldest daughter, Joan).

Catherine de Valois, mother of Henry VI, was also passed over as regent and she, too, remarried and had a family with her new husband. Catherine – who was only in her 20s when Henry V died – caused something of a scandal by secretly marrying the Welsh courtier Owen Tudor and the pair went on to have at least four children together. The repercussions of that second marriage are fascinating as it is from that union that the Tudor dynasty of England is descended. ⊙

PHILIPPA OF HAINAULT

THE IDEAL CONSORT

In her recent biography, Kathryn Warner names Philippa of Hainault the 'Mother of the English Nation', and she is not wrong. Philippa was the co-founder of the extensive bloodline that led to the well-known Wars of the Roses a century later. However, she was much more than a mother, embodying every aspect of her position as consort to Edward III. While often overlooked in favour of queens who had more dramatic lives, Philippa could be considered a perfect example of a medieval queen.

The daughter of Count William of Hainault and Joan de Valois, Philippa wed Edward III in January 1328. The couple's marriage was part of a union intended to support the usurpation of Edward II, and strengthened Edward III's position on the English throne.

Philippa's early tenure as queen consort was dominated by her mother-in-law, Isabella of France (*see page 39*), who retained control of England until October 1330. As a result, there are few details from this period of Philippa's life until her coronation in February 1330, which was followed by Edward's successful coup against Isabella six months later.

From 1331 onwards, however, Philippa appears at the forefront of the records alongside her husband, carrying out her expected duties as a queen. She readily exercised her patronage and influence, supported Edward throughout his military campaigns in both Scotland and France, and fulfilled her role in the continuation of the Plantagenet dynasty.

Philippa and Edward's marriage has often been considered a happy one. She remained at her husband's side as much as physically possible, and their union resulted in 12 children. However, Philippa was also known for building up excessive debts, which, despite Edward III's attempts to control, were never fully repaid during her lifetime. Scholars have suggested that her lavish tastes were to blame, but it is also thought that Philippa's expenditure on patronage (a key part of queenly agency) may have similarly led to this issue – especially when coupled with the lack of income she received during the years that Isabella of France had been in control.

Philippa died in August 1369 and was interred at Westminster Abbey, predeceasing her husband by eight years. Her tenure lasted four decades – the longest of any medieval English consort – and marked the end of a 70-year period of continued queenship. ⊙

FACT FILE

BORN: 1310 or 1315

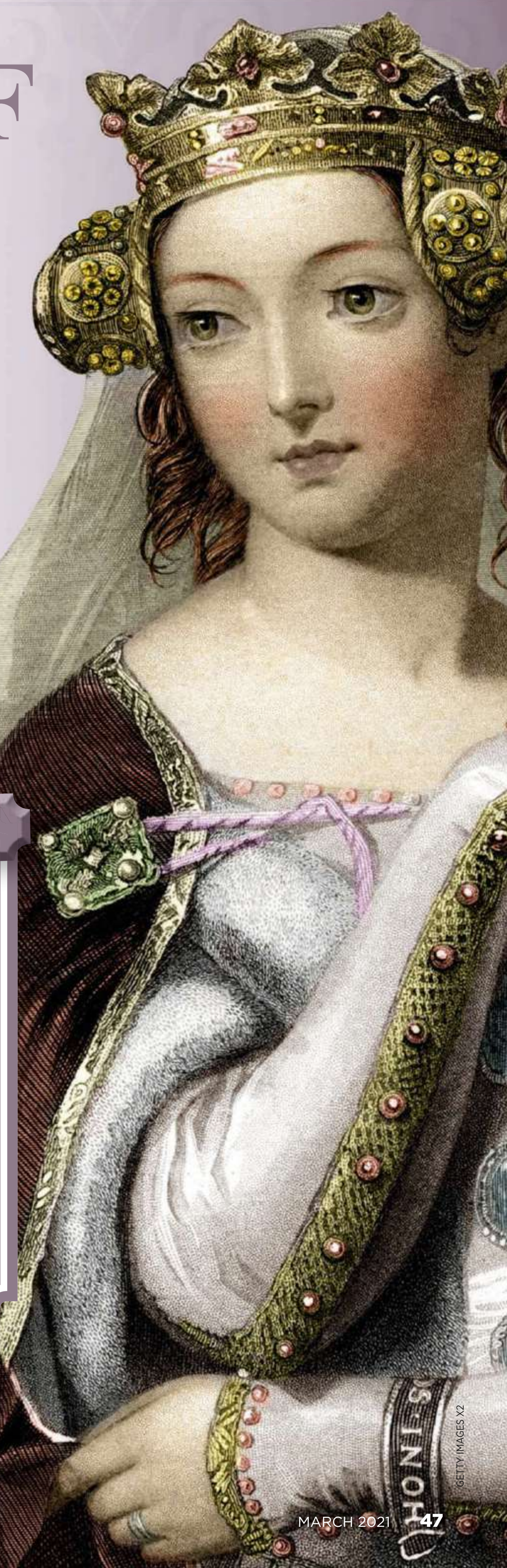
DIED: 15 August 1369

QUEEN FROM: 24 January 1328 until 15 August 1369

PARENTS: Count William of Hainault and Joan de Valois

CHILDREN: Seven sons and five daughters), including Edward the Black Prince, who died before he could inherit the throne.

REMEMBERED FOR: Her long tenure as queen consort, during which time she faithfully supported her husband, Edward III. She also acted as regent while he was away fighting abroad.



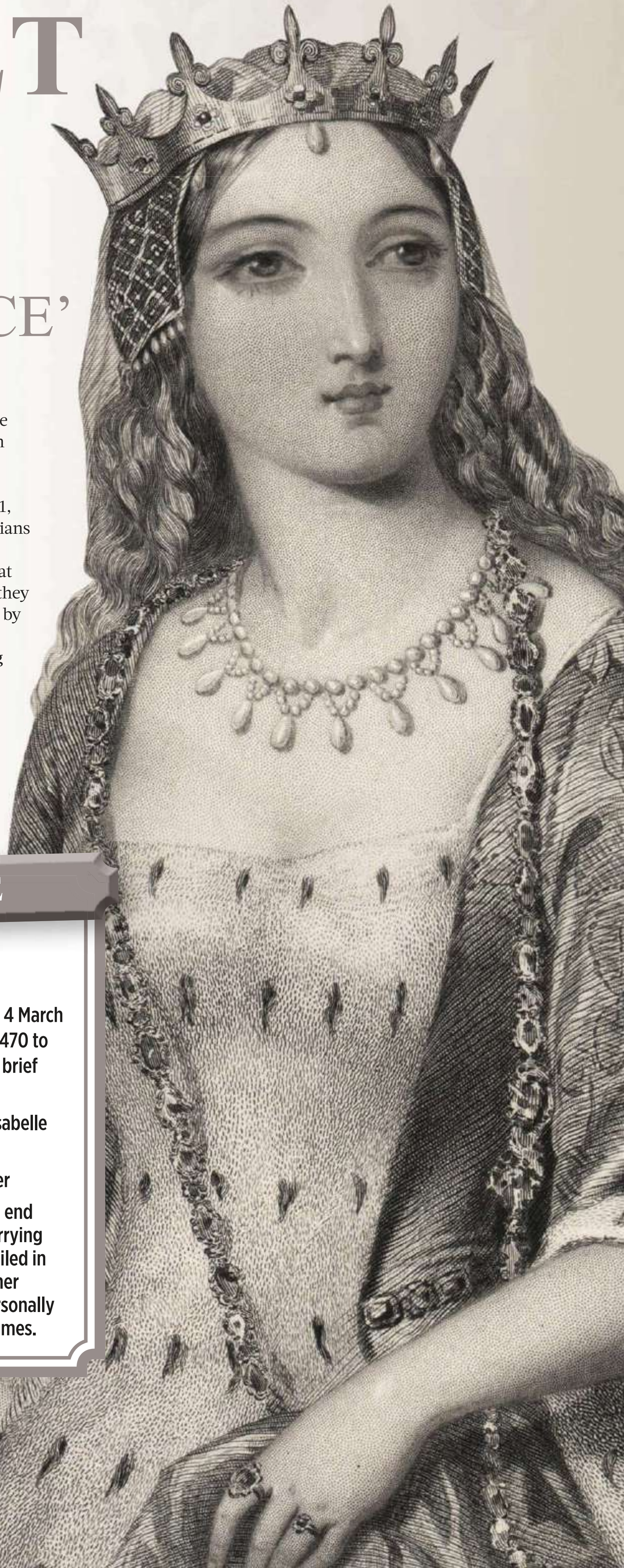
GETTY IMAGES X2

KATIA WRIGHT is a PhD student at the University of Winchester, where her doctoral research focuses on England's 14th-century queens and their roles as landowners. She has worked on several joint projects, including co-editing a special edition of the *Royal Studies Journal*

IN PROFILE

MARGARET OF ANJOU

SHAKESPEARE'S 'SHE-WOLF OF FRANCE'



Margaret of Anjou was the wife of the last Lancastrian king of England, Henry VI, who reigned from 1422–61 and again from 1470–71. She was the second daughter and fourth surviving child of René, duke of Anjou, and his wife, Isabelle, daughter and heir of Charles II, duke of Lorraine.

Margaret's connections to many important European ruling families, including the French royals, was the main reason why her marriage to Henry was arranged. Their union was meant to cement an alliance between England and France, ending the conflict that we know today as the Hundred Years' War.

Yet Margaret is arguably best remembered from William Shakespeare's history plays as the 'She-Wolf of France' (a title she shares with Isabella of France, *page 39*) – a ruthless queen who assumed leadership during the Wars of the Roses when Henry VI suffered a physical, or possibly mental, breakdown.

Henry's incapacity in the early 1450s left Margaret with no choice but to take on a central role in the worsening conflict between the Lancastrian and Yorkist factions. When the Lancastrians were finally defeated at the battle of Towton on 29 March 1461, the leader of the Yorkists, Edward, earl of March (the son of Richard, duke of York, who had been slain in an earlier battle), took the throne as Edward IV.

Margaret fled to Scotland and then to France with her son, Edward of Lancaster, where she worked to gather support and raise an army to restore her husband to the throne. When Edward IV's erstwhile supporter, Richard Neville, earl of Warwick, transferred his support to the Lancastrians in 1469, Margaret allied herself with him and married her son to Warwick's younger daughter, Anne.

Henry VI was briefly restored to the throne following Warwick's invasion of England in September 1470, but the Yorkists rallied and Edward IV returned with an army in March 1471, defeating Warwick and the Lancastrians at the battle of Barnet. Margaret and Prince Edward led the Lancastrians at Tewkesbury in May 1471 but, again, they were defeated and she was captured by the Yorkists a few days later. Worse still, Prince Edward was slain during the battle and Henry was murdered in the Tower of London most likely on the orders of Edward IV.

With her son and husband both dead, Margaret lost her main purpose in life. She herself would die in obscurity, as a pensioner of Louis XI in France. ⊙

FACT FILE

BORN: 23 or 24 March 1430

DIED: 25 August 1482

QUEEN FROM: 22 April 1445 to 4 March 1461, and again from October 1470 to May 1471 during her husband's brief restoration to the throne

PARENTS: René of Anjou and Isabelle of Lorraine

CHILDREN: Edward of Lancaster

REMEMBERED FOR: Helping to end the Hundred Years' War by marrying Henry VI, but becoming embroiled in the Wars of the Roses. Due to her husband's poor health, she personally led the Lancastrian faction at times.

DR MICHELE SEAH is a medieval historian. She recently gained her PhD at the University of Newcastle, Australia, specialising in the economic resources and affinities of queens consort in 15th-century England.

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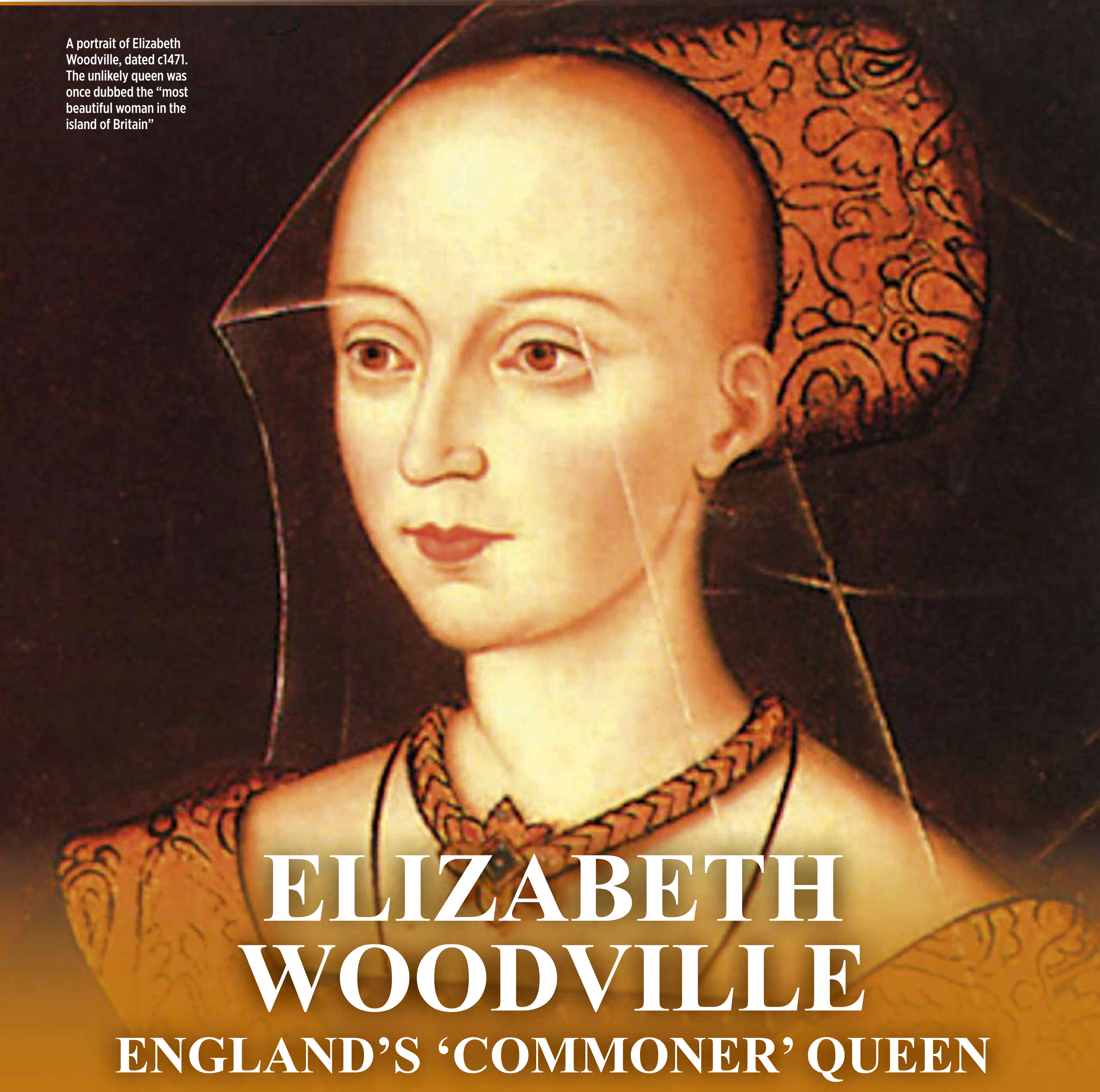


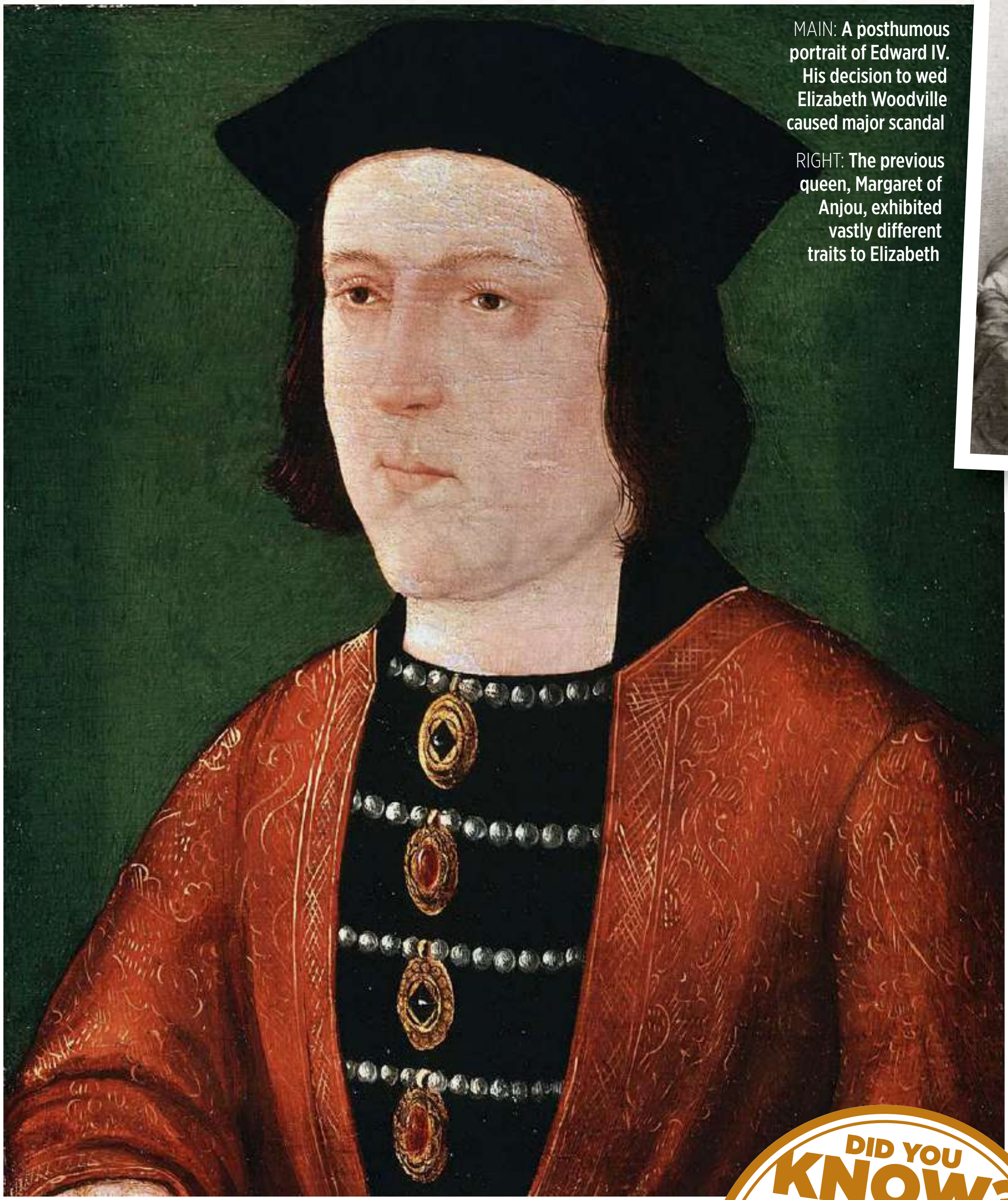
A portrait of Elizabeth Woodville, dated c1471. The unlikely queen was once dubbed the "most beautiful woman in the island of Britain"

ELIZABETH WOODVILLE

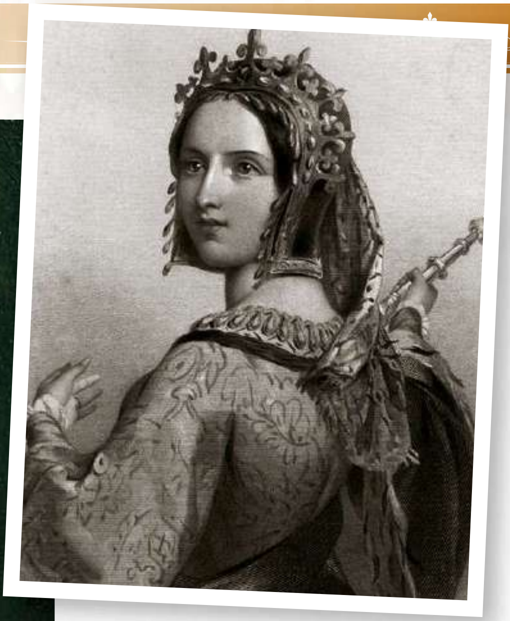
ENGLAND'S 'COMMONER' QUEEN

By deciding to wed Elizabeth Woodville, Edward IV defied the royal notion that marriage should be used as a diplomatic tool, instead choosing to prioritise love – or perhaps lust. **Amy Licence** tells the story of the couple's extraordinary 19-year relationship…

ALAMY X1, GETTY IMAGES X1



MAIN: A posthumous portrait of Edward IV. His decision to wed Elizabeth Woodville caused major scandal



RIGHT: The previous queen, Margaret of Anjou, exhibited vastly different traits to Elizabeth

Henry VIII tends to be the monarch who gets frequently cited for breaking the royal marital mould by choosing his own wives from among his subjects. In particular, the narrative arcs of his relations with Anne Boleyn and Catherine Howard continue to fascinate, five centuries after his passion turned to hatred and he sent them to their deaths.

However, Henry was – to a degree – following the example set by Edward IV, the Yorkist grandfather whom he resembled in both looks and appetite. Edward may not have had as many wives as Henry, but his liaisons with women were just as complex and, perhaps, equally destructive on a national scale. Instead of following the traditional kingly route and negotiating for an influential foreign bride, Edward followed his heart and chose his wife for her personal qualities. Despite the scandal this created, the marriage proved successful and lasted until his death.

A SURPRISE CHOICE

Five years older than her royal husband, Elizabeth Woodville was an unlikely queen. Her legendary blonde beauty entranced the young king to the extent that he married her in spite of tradition, in spite of advice – and perhaps even in spite of himself.

While none could fault her personal charms, Elizabeth was considered an unacceptable choice for an English queen by most of Edward's advisors. She was a widow, a mother, and the daughter of a former Lancastrian knight – a man whom Edward had held in contempt. She brought no dowry or international connections, no territories or promise of diplomatic support. What she did bring, though, was her fertility, bearing the king 10 children in addition to the two sons by her first husband, Sir John Grey.

Elizabeth also brought in a model of queenship that differed vastly from that of the woman she replaced, the Lancastrian Margaret of Anjou (*see page 48*). Elizabeth may have begun her reign as unsuitable and unpopular, but in fact, she was the perfect embodiment of the beautiful, submissive, fertile queen – an archetype of medieval literature.

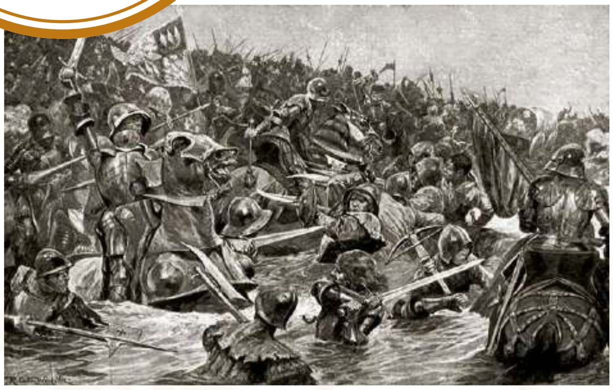
Exactly when Elizabeth and Edward first met is unclear. They may well have been thrown together in the small, elite world of the English aristocracy, at court or some important event in the 1450s. The pair may even have known each other as children, as Elizabeth's parents appear to have served in Rouen while Edward's father was resident there as Lieutenant of Normandy. But for much of Edward's youth, Elizabeth was married and unavailable, a situation that only changed shortly before he became king. It is possible that he admired her before this point but, even if they had never previously seen one another, their attraction was quickly established.

Edward's victory at Towton

DID YOU KNOW?

NEXT IN LINE

In 1433, Elizabeth Woodville's mother, Jacquetta, married John, Duke of Bedford – uncle to the young Henry VI. Had Henry died, Jacquetta stood to become queen. As it happened, John passed away in 1435 and she later wed Richard Woodville.



Edward's 1461 victory at Towton saw him replace the Lancastrian king, Henry VI

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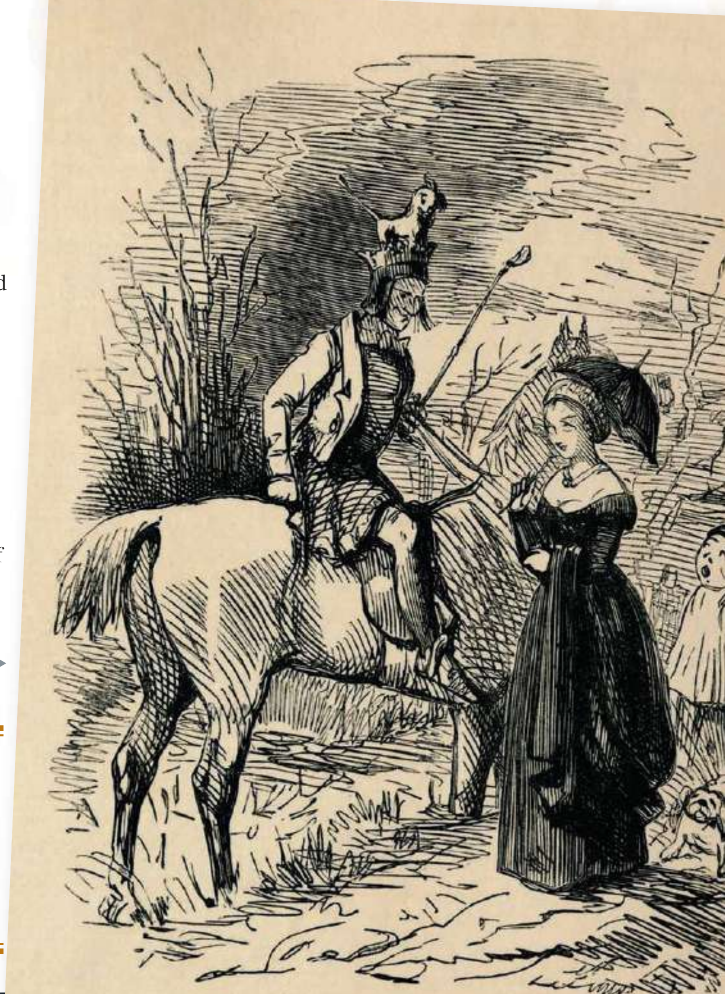
in March 1461 put the Woodvilles in a difficult position – the family had fought on the 'wrong' side and survived. Yet in June that year, Edward stayed at their home at Groby, Leicestershire, and granted a pardon to Elizabeth's father, heralding a new relationship between the Woodvilles and the Yorkists. The newly widowed Elizabeth is almost certain to have sought shelter under her parents' roof, so this may well have been a critical moment in their relationship.

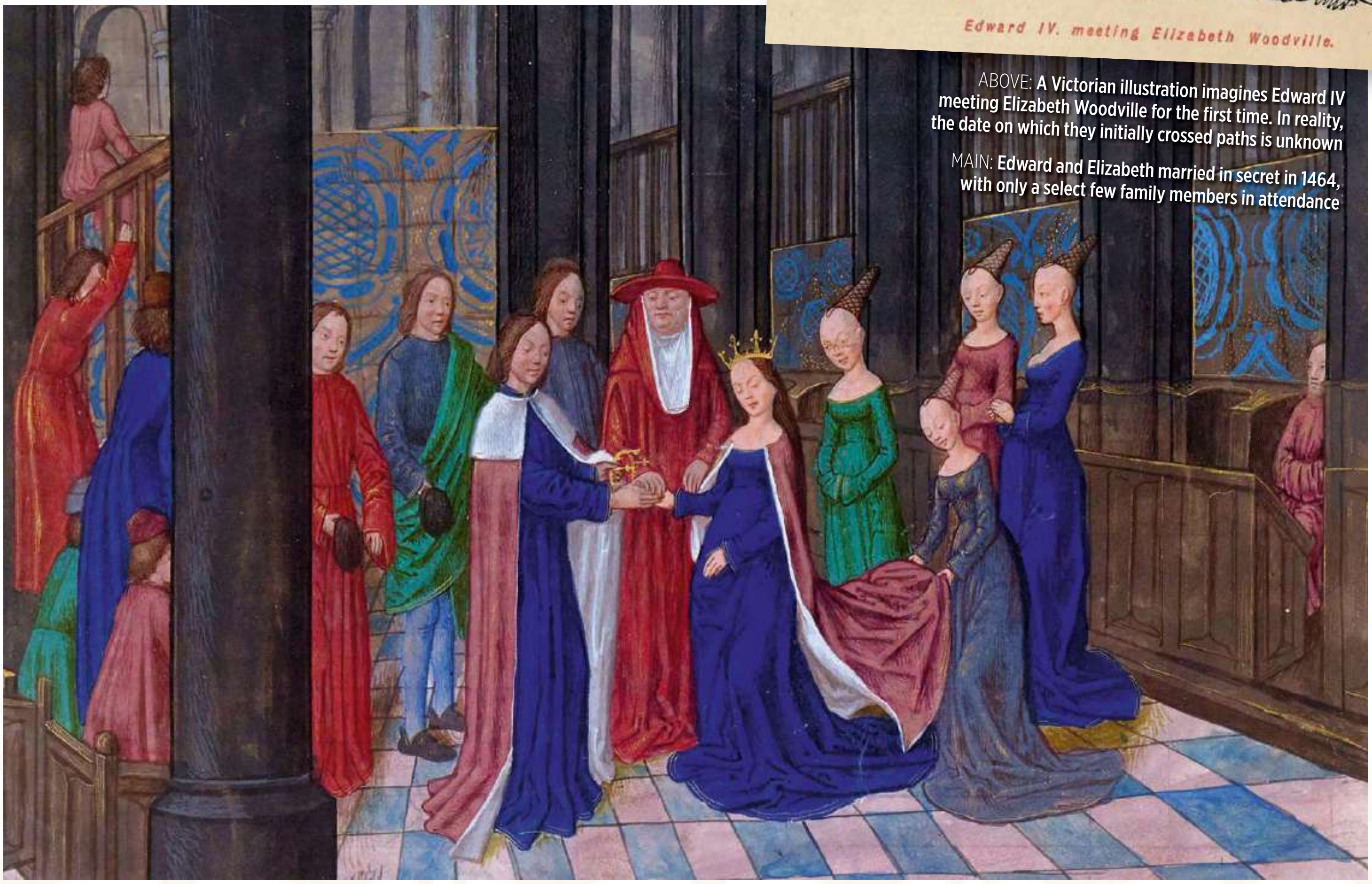
Elizabeth's first clear contact with Edward's court came on 13 April 1464, only a few months before the suggested date of their marriage. She had appealed to William, Lord Hastings, probably in his role as overseer of the Yorkist Midlands, for his assistance in a dispute arising with her mother-in-law. Legend has Elizabeth waiting for Edward under an oak tree in Whittlebury Forest, a helpless widow, hoping to plead for the inheritances of her sons. Perhaps he did come riding by, listen to her problems and fall in love. When Elizabeth became aware of Edward's intentions and agreed to become his wife, knowing his position, she cannot have known what lay ahead, but she must have agreed to collude in his veil of secrecy. Her decision to marry the king cannot have been one she would have taken lightly.

Elizabeth married Edward in secret, some time before September 1464. The exact date and circumstances of this event are still hotly debated among historians, especially because the choices Edward made were later used to undermine his dynastic line. The ceremony appears to have taken place in the chapel at Groby, with the collusion of Elizabeth's mother, Jacquetta, although it was kept secret from her father at that point. This choice was hardly surprising, given the reaction Edward could

▶

> "Her legendary beauty entranced the young king to the extent that he married her in spite of tradition"


Edward IV. meeting Elizabeth Woodville.



ABOVE: A Victorian illustration imagines Edward IV meeting Elizabeth Woodville for the first time. In reality, the date on which they initially crossed paths is unknown

MAIN: Edward and Elizabeth married in secret in 1464, with only a select few family members in attendance

◀ anticipate to the match, but there is also the possibility that the ritual was intended as a means of seduction rather than a lasting commitment.

Some historians have suggested that the king was, in fact, already married at this point. Almost 20 years later, after Edward's death, the question of his children's legitimacy turned upon a statement made by Robert Stillington, Bishop of Bath and Wells, who asserted that a prior arrangement between Edward and Eleanor Butler, née Talbot, invalidated his marriage to Elizabeth.

This argument was used to depose Edward's eldest son Edward V and replace him with Edward's brother, Richard III. Eleanor was already conveniently long-dead by this time, as were any other witnesses, so the plausibility of the claim rested upon what was known of Edward's character. His contemporary reputation as a womaniser did little to allay this possibility, and the secret marriage to Elizabeth only added to the doubts. At the time, there was no way that Edward could have predicted his early death, or his brother's actions, although by rejecting the usual practice of conducting a royal marriage in public, he called his motives into question.

PRODUCTIVE PARTNERS

Edward and Elizabeth were married for 19 years. Their relationship spanned a turbulent period, during which Edward lost and regained the throne, faced rebellion and was forced into exile. This meant that there were periods when the couple were separated, unsure whether or not they would see each other again.

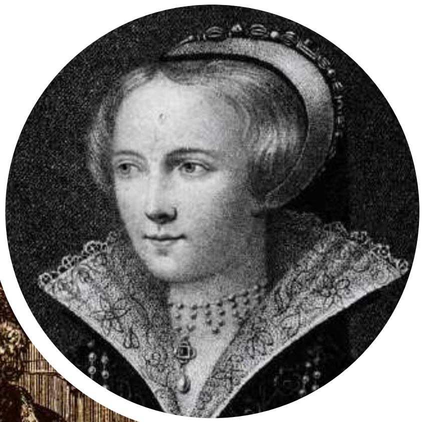
Edward also had mistresses, especially towards the end of his life, when he famously enjoyed the company of Jane Shore. However, this was by no means unusual, so would not necessarily have been a cause for conflict in the way that modern, post-Romantic sensibilities might anticipate. It was almost expected, for the reasons of health and safety, that men would abstain from sleeping with their pregnant wives but embark on affairs elsewhere. While Edward might share another woman's bed, he had made Elizabeth his queen and, unlike his future grandson Henry VIII, he never intended to dislodge her from that position.

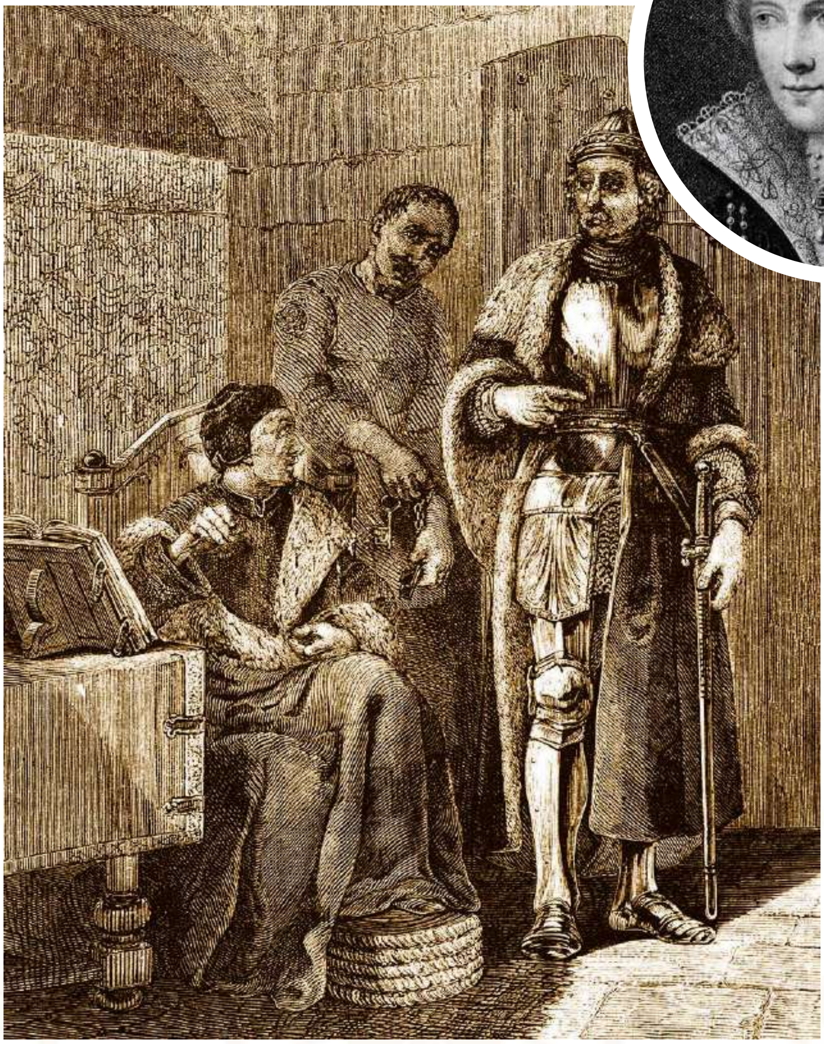
Sex with other women would have been a diversion and a physical outlet, rather than an attempt to replace Elizabeth; it was advised by physicians as essential to health, and might even have been welcomed by the queen later in life, or while she was indisposed. In spite of these issues, the royal marriage never appears to have foundered or weakened. Despite these difficulties and the opposition to their union, Elizabeth and Edward were united in their desire to be together.

Today, it is difficult to recover the intimate details of a private life that was not committed to letters or a diary. Yet, it is possible to look at the indications that suggest the marriage did work on a personal level, particularly Edward's ability to maintain the union in the wake of the contemporary dislike of Elizabeth's family. In defying expectations that he had a duty to use marriage as a diplomatic tool, Edward prioritised love, or perhaps lust, in a way that exposed his own feelings. There was no question that he desired Elizabeth and was prepared to take considerable risks to make her his queen.

Yet amid all the controversy, Elizabeth's own feelings are less transparent. A few of the chroniclers mention her initial

Jane Shore was just one of Edward IV's many extramarital conquests





The deposed Henry VI is visited by the Earl of Warwick, who helped him briefly retake the throne from Edward IV in 1470

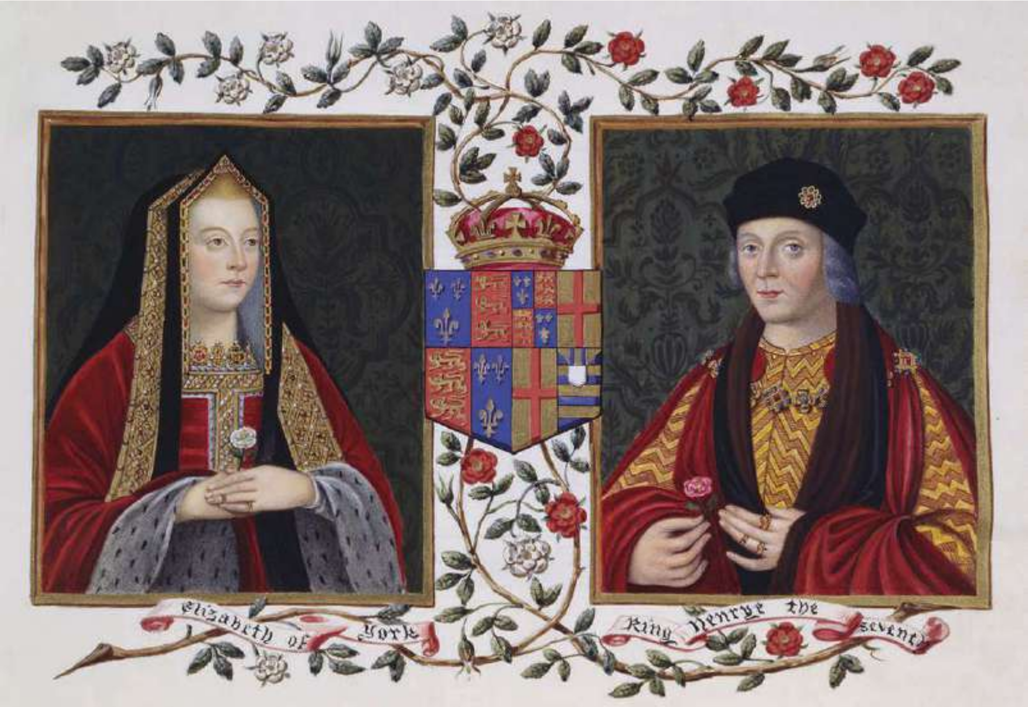
GETTY IMAGES X4, ALAMY X1

resistance to Edward's advances on moral grounds, refusing to become his mistress in a way that made him determined to make her his wife. However, this does not appear to have been as conscious a policy as that used by Anne Boleyn six decades later.

There is no question that Edward was a great catch for a knight's widow. Apart from his considerable personal charms, to bag a king was the ultimate achievement as a career marriage, and brought unprecedented advantages to the Woodville family – something that Elizabeth must have been acutely aware of. But this may have been a realistic move, not a cynical one. It was the happy union of attraction and advantage that would have made the match so unique.

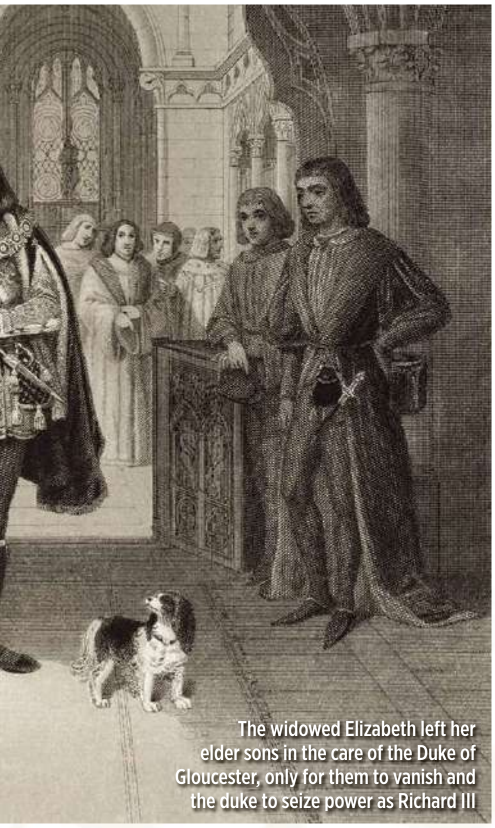
Elizabeth bore Edward 10 children, with their youngest arriving just three years before the king's death. Of their seven girls and three boys, only five (all daughters) reached adulthood, the others falling victim to illness, or disappearing inside the Tower of London, as was the case with the two elder boys, Edward V and his brother Richard.

The provision for the young Prince Edward's education and his establishment at Ludlow Castle in the 1470s show that his parents cared deeply about the way his learning was imparted, his leisure hours and the influences upon him. He was to be allowed time to play and to be well fed, well slept and preserved from the influence of those who might be uncouth, ill, or of evil intent.



The marriage of Elizabeth of York to the Lancastrian Henry VII finally restored peace between the two warring houses

> "The family appears to have been a close, warm unit, retaining a sense of loyalty and mutual support"



The widowed Elizabeth left her elder sons in the care of the Duke of Gloucester, only for them to vanish and the duke to seize power as Richard III

On the whole, the royal family appears to have been a close, warm unit, which retained a sense of loyalty and mutual support throughout Edward's reign and afterwards. Their household accounts and the glimpses offered by eyewitnesses capture their mutual investment in the life they had created together and fought to protect. Their eldest daughter, Elizabeth of York, continued to help her sisters and their offspring after she had married Henry VII and become queen.

AN END COME TOO SOON

As 1483 dawned, Edward and Elizabeth might still have anticipated many years together. They had been married almost 19 years, the country was at peace and Edward himself was approaching his 41st birthday. He was middle-aged by contemporary standards, and although not as active and fit as his earlier years, had contemplated personally leading an army against the Scots just one year previously. The marriage had been placed under considerable pressure by Edward's conflicts with his nobility, as rivalry was created by jealousy at the new-found wealth of the Woodvilles.

Yet there are no surviving anecdotes that relate to conflict between the couple, or any lessening of affection. None of the gossipy stories that are typically associated with the wives of Henry VIII, or those of Henry VI, Richard III and Henry VII, emerge about Edward and Elizabeth. Their partnership appeared complementary, harmonious and enduring, with Edward adopting a martial style of leadership, ruling by merit of his larger-than-life personality and Elizabeth taking the then typically feminine role of the supportive and fertile, but essentially apolitical, queen.

Edward's premature death in April 1483 ended a productive partnership before it had fully come to fruition, before their eldest son was of age. Having been the 'glue' that bound the disparate elements of his court together, Edward's absence proved to be the catalyst that precipitated civil chaos.

Losing control of power, and of her sons, Elizabeth witnessed the deaths of friends and relatives before peace was restored under her son-in-law, Henry VII. Elizabeth retired to Bermondsey Abbey, spending her final days in seclusion before being laid to rest, in 1492, in a humble grave, at her own request, alongside Edward in St George's Chapel at Windsor. They lie there today, permanently united in death, their marriage standing as a symbol of the strong rule they previously embodied in life. ⊙

AMY LICENCE is an author, journalist and historian. Her books include *Edward IV and Elizabeth Woodville: A True Romance* (Amberley, 2016)

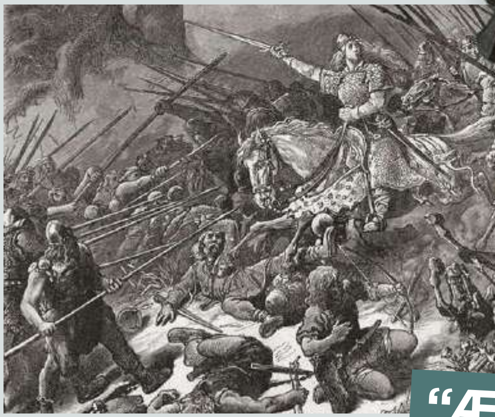
13 MORE MEDIEVAL QUEENS

Emma Slattery Williams looks at a selection of other medieval queens and their struggles for power and influence

1 ÆTHELFLÆD

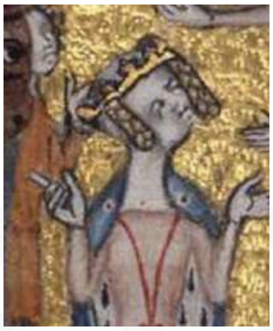
c870–918

Known as the Lady of the Mercians, Æthelflæd was the eldest daughter of Alfred the Great of Wessex. Though she played an important role in Anglo-Saxon England, her story is often overshadowed by her more famous father. Æthelflæd was born during a chaotic time, at the zenith of the Viking invasions of the British Isles, but in 878 her father emerged victorious at the Battle of Edington. Perhaps as young as 16, Æthelflæd was married to Æthelred, Lord of the Mercians – an alliance that united the last Saxon kingdoms that were still holding out against the Vikings. Together, the couple took back much Mercian land from the Vikings. Æthelflæd's role in the affairs of state grew and she took on building projects and military campaigns as her husband became ill. When Æthelred died, the Mercian nobles accepted Æthelflæd as sole ruler and she did not remarry. Together with her brother, Edward the Elder, their armies repelled many Viking attacks and in 917, Æthelflæd captured the Viking stronghold of Derby – with Leicester soon following. In 918, at the height of her power, Æthelflæd died. Her daughter Ælfwynn succeeded but was soon deposed by Edward. In 924, Edward's son and Æthelflæd's nephew, Æthelstan, acceded the thrones of both Mercia and Wessex. He had been raised in Æthelflæd's court and aided by the wisdom he had learned from his aunt, became the first king of the English.



Æthelflæd leads her troops against the Welsh c916

> "Æthelflæd is often overshadowed by her more famous father"



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2 MARY DE BOHUN

c1369–94

The first wife of the future Henry IV of England, Mary de Bohun technically never became queen, as she died before her husband ascended the throne. She had plenty of royal blood herself, though – her father was descended from Edward I and via her mother she was descended from Henry III. Mary and her sister Eleanor were heiresses to a substantial fortune, and her brother-in-law, Thomas of Woodstock, allegedly tried to coerce Mary into becoming a nun so they would not have to share the inheritance. However, Mary's aunt and Edward III's son, John of Gaunt, quickly married her to John's son, Henry Bolingbroke. Henry and Mary had six children, and she died giving birth to the last one. Five years later, Henry overthrew Richard II and took the throne of England – their son would succeed him as Henry V.

3 BERTHA OF KENT

c565–601

Bertha was a Frankish princess and daughter of Charibert I of Paris who married Æthelberht of Kent probably when she was in her early teens. With few records surviving from the sixth century, little is known of Bertha's early life. The marriage contract with Æthelberht allowed Bertha to continue practising her Christian faith, even though her husband was a pagan.

Bertha brought a priest to England with her and used St Martin's Church in Canterbury as her private chapel. In 596, a monk named Augustine was sent by Pope Gregory the Great to convert the Anglo-Saxons to Christianity. Æthelberht allowed Augustine to preach from St Martin's and eventually converted – the first Anglo-Saxon king to do so, and an event that Bertha may have played a major role in. In 601, Pope Gregory sent a letter to Bertha praising her faith and encouraging her to spread Christianity; some speculate that she may even have helped arrange Augustine's' original mission.

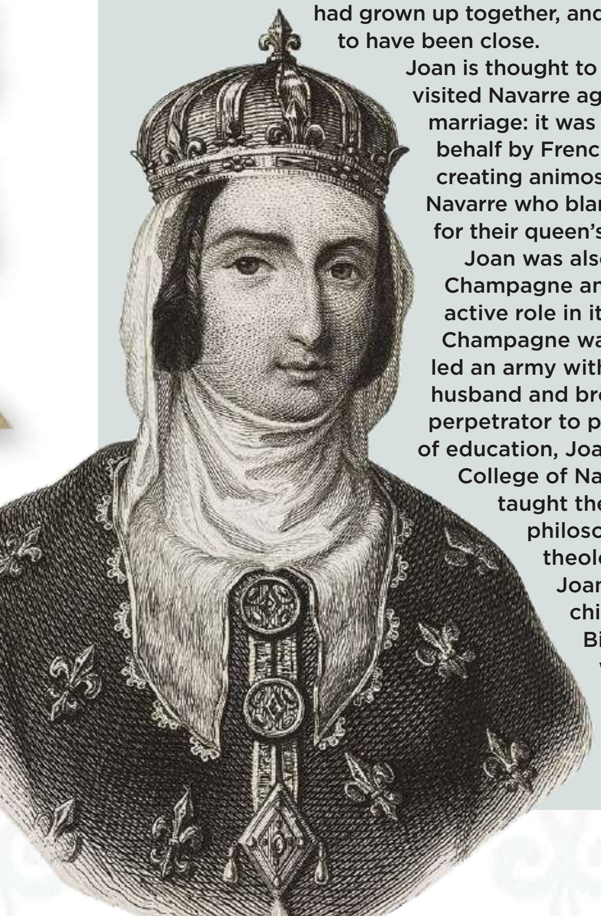
5 JOAN I OF NAVARRE

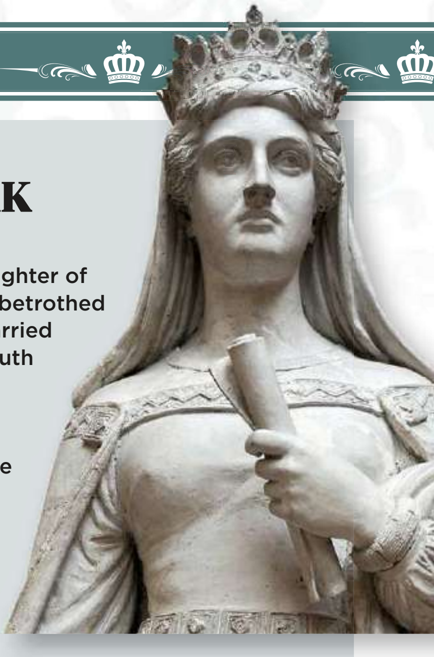
1273–1305

Joan I of Navarre was mother to three French kings (Louis X, Philip V and Charles IV) – and Isabella, queen consort of English king Edward II. Joan's father, Henry I of Navarre, died a year after she was born so her mother Blanche became regent, as Joan was the sole heir. Many foreign powers, as well as forces within Navarre, attempted to take advantage of this situation, forcing Blanche and Joan to seek refuge at the French court. Joan was brought up there and in 1284 married the future Philip IV of France, bringing the kingdom of Navarre under French control. Joan and Philip had grown up together, and are thought to have been close.

Joan is thought to have never visited Navarre again after her marriage: it was ruled on her behalf by French governors, creating animosity from those in Navarre who blamed the French for their queen's absence.

Joan was also countess of Champagne and played an active role in its affairs. When Champagne was invaded, she led an army without her husband and brought the perpetrator to prison. A patron of education, Joan founded the College of Navarre which taught the arts, philosophy and theology. In 1305, Joan died in childbirth – the Bishop of Troyes was accused of killing her by witchcraft, but was later released.





4 MARGARET OF DENMARK

1353–1412

At six years old, Margaret, daughter of Valdemar IV of Denmark, was betrothed to Haakon, king of Norway. Married in 1363, Margaret spent her youth in Norway, and gave birth to a son, Olaf, in 1370. When her father died in 1375, Margaret successfully claimed the throne of Denmark for Olaf; by 1380, she was also ruling Norway on behalf of her son following the death of Haakon, forming a union between Denmark and Norway that would remain until 1814.

During her regency, Margaret won back lands that had been taken by the Hanseatic League – a federation of north German towns and cities formed to protect mutual trading interests – and, renowned for her leadership skills was known as the Lady King by her people. Once Olaf came of age, with his mother's help he staked his claim on the Swedish throne – Haakon's father had also been king of Sweden before being defeated by Albert of Mecklenburg. Olaf unexpectedly died in 1387 and Margaret swiftly became regent in both Denmark and Norway, allying with the Swedish nobles against their king. In 1388, the nobles declared Margaret the rightful ruler of Sweden. She defeated Albert the following year, keeping him captive for six years while peace was negotiated.

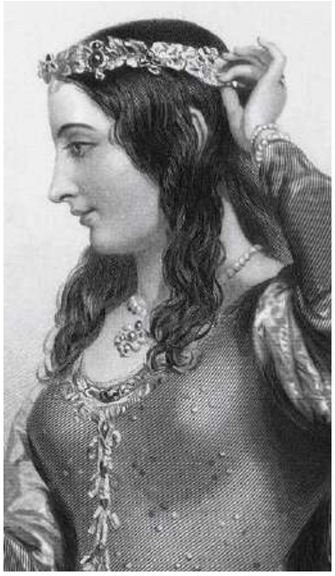
DID YOU KNOW?

SCANDINAVIAN GIRL POWER

Until the ascension of Margrethe II in 1972, Denmark had not had a female ruler since Margaret I in the 14th century – something that only changed following a amendment to the rules of succession in 1953.

6 ELEANOR OF PROVENCE

c1223–91



The unpopularity of Eleanor of Provence, wife of Henry III of England, intensified the conflicts between the king and his barons. Daughter of Raymond Berengar IV, count of Provence, and Beatrice of Savoy, Eleanor's marriage to Henry was intended to sate his expansion ambitions abroad. However, Eleanor ensured that positions of power within England were awarded to her own family members, alienating many English barons.

When Henry was captured by the rebel barons, who took over government, Eleanor presided over royalist exiles in France and raised an invasion force. Her fleet was wrecked but the rebels were eventually quashed, allowing the queen to return to England. Eleanor was widely disliked for her nepotism and her royal barge was often pelted with eggs and vegetables as it passed down the Thames. She did, however, introduce many French-inspired fashions to England, including a new style of wimple [medieval headdress] and was a lover of poetry and romances. After Henry died in 1272, Eleanor helped raise her grandchildren, before retiring to a convent.

7 ELIZABETH OF YORK

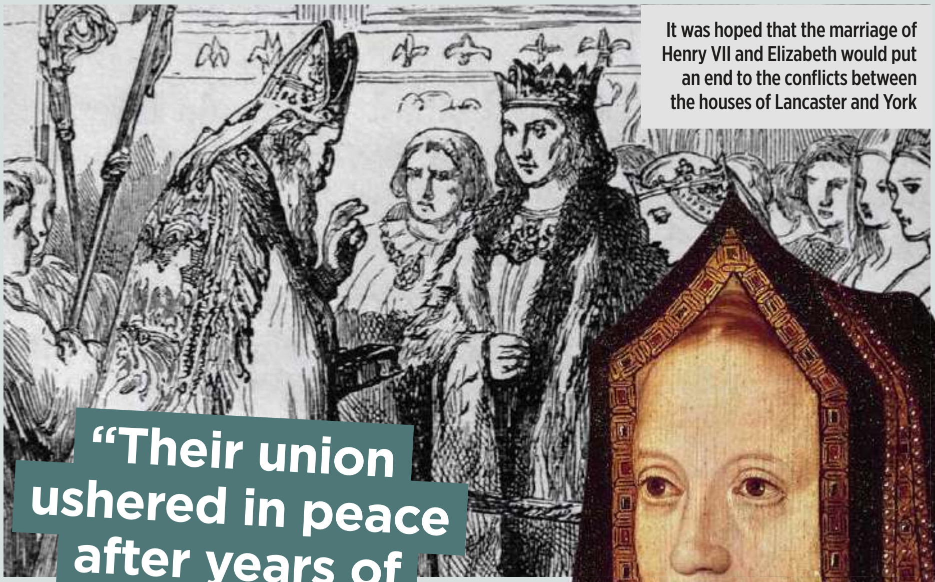
1466–1503

Born during the Wars of the Roses to Edward IV and Elizabeth Woodville, Elizabeth of York's marriage to Henry Tudor aimed to unite a divided kingdom and created one of England's greatest royal dynasties.

As the eldest daughter of the king, Elizabeth was a desirable bride and was betrothed to the Dauphin of France at the age of nine, before the French king changed his mind. In 1483, Edward IV unexpectedly died, and her uncle – Richard III – declared Elizabeth and her siblings illegitimate and claimed the throne for himself. The fate of Elizabeth's two brothers, the Princes in the Tower, still remains one of history's greatest mysteries. It has often been claimed that Richard III considered marrying Elizabeth after Anne Neville's death in March 1485. But in August that year, Richard was defeated at Bosworth by Henry Tudor, who held a slender Lancastrian claim to the throne.

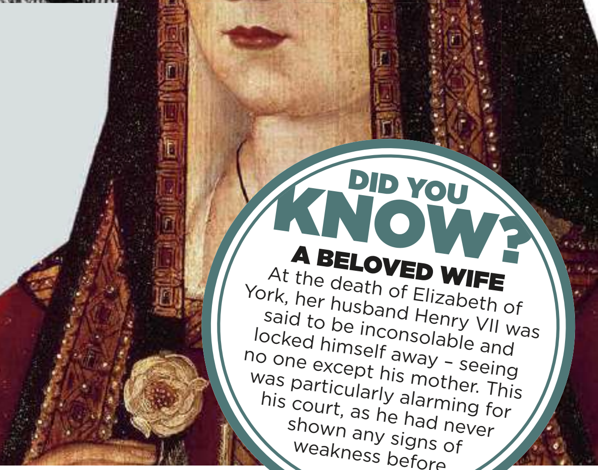
Henry and Elizabeth's union brought together the rival claims of York and Lancaster, ushering in peace after years of civil war. Their marriage appeared to be a personally happy and dynastically successful one: their two daughters became queen consorts of France and Scotland and their second son became one of England's most well-known monarchs – Henry VIII – after the premature death of his older brother, Prince Arthur.

Elizabeth may not have involved herself in state affairs, but she was a doting mother and would often intercede with the king on behalf of her subjects. She died in 1503 – an event that greatly affected the future Henry VIII, who adored his mother.



It was hoped that the marriage of Henry VII and Elizabeth would put an end to the conflicts between the houses of Lancaster and York

> "Their union ushered in peace after years of civil war"



DID YOU KNOW?

A BELOVED WIFE

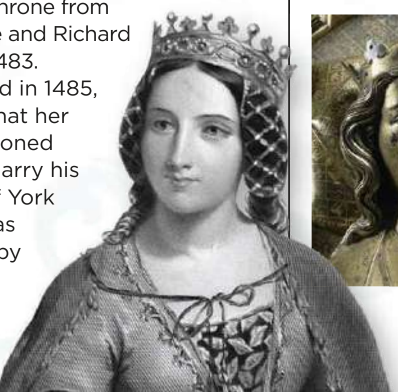
At the death of Elizabeth of York, her husband Henry VII was said to be inconsolable and locked himself away – seeing no one except his mother. This was particularly alarming for his court, as he had never shown any signs of weakness before.

8 ANNE NEVILLE

1456–85

Anne Neville was used as pawn by her ambitious father, Richard Neville, the Earl of Warwick. He played a key role in the Wars of the Roses – switching between both the York and Lancastrian sides and helping to depose two kings. In 1470, Anne was married to the Lancastrian heir, Prince Edward, after Warwick had turned from the house of York. Prince Edward was killed at the Battle of Tewkesbury, and Anne was taken prisoner. At some point between 1472 and 1474, she was married to the future Richard III and they had a son, Edward, who died before his 11th birthday. When Richard took the throne from his nephews, Anne and Richard were crowned in 1483.

When Anne died in 1485, rumours spread that her husband had poisoned her so he could marry his niece Elizabeth of York – Anne's death was probably caused by tuberculosis.



9 ELEANOR OF CASTILE

1241–90

Wife of Edward I of England, Eleanor of Castile was often considered the real power behind the throne. Daughter of Ferdinand III of Castile and Joan, heir to the county of Ponthieu, Eleanor received a thorough education that prepared her for her role as queen. As a teenager, she married Edward and they spent much time together – rare for a medieval royal marriage.

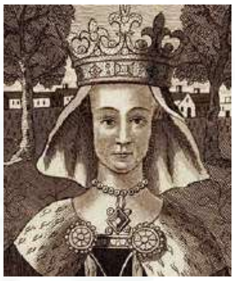
Eleanor accompanied her husband on campaigns, even while pregnant. Interested in military affairs, she held influence over her husband, arranged diplomatic marriages and popularised the use of tapestries among the nobility. She died in 1290 and Edward commissioned 12 elaborate stone monuments, known as Eleanor Crosses, in tribute to her.

10 EADGIFU OF KENT

c903–66

Daughter of Sigehelm, a Kentish ealdorman (a high-status official in Anglo-Saxon England), Eadgifu became the third wife of Edward the Elder of Wessex. She held a lot of land in Kent, and this marriage allowed Edward to extend his territory. Little is known of Eadgifu during the reign of her stepson Æthelstan, but she was a prominent figure in court during the reign of her two sons, Edmund I and Eadred of England. She even eclipsed her daughters-in-law's power as a dowager queen and mother of the king.

Eadgifu's name often appears in witness lists of charters during Edmund's reign, suggesting she was often present at important state meetings. She was also a noted patron of many churches.



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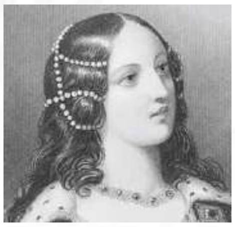
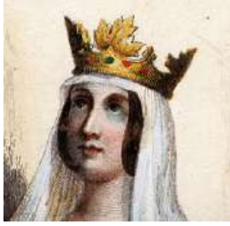


11 ISABELLA OF VALOIS

1389–1409

At six years old, Isabella was married to Richard II of England but was widowed three years later. As the daughter of Charles VI of France, her marriage was intended to bring peace between the two nations. Though Richard was more than 20 years Isabella's senior, he regularly visited his young bride and made her laugh. In 1399, Richard was usurped by Henry IV, and died in captivity. Henry tried to wed Isabella to his son, but after much difficulty she was allowed to return to France. She later married Charles, future Duke of Orléans, but died in childbirth in 1409.



12 BLANCHE OF CASTILE

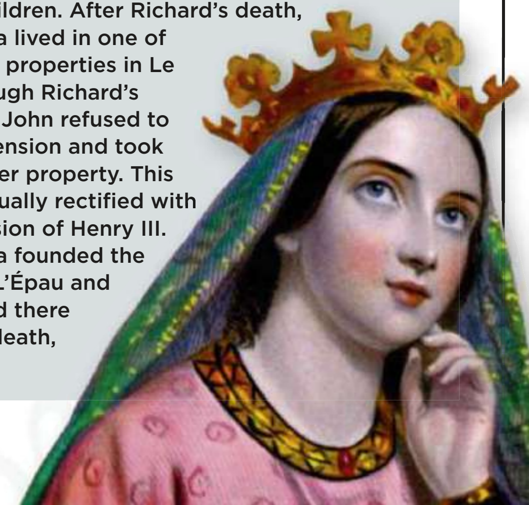
1188–1252

Daughter of Alfonso VIII of Castile and Eleanor of England, Blanche was not the first choice of bride for the future Louis VIII. Her sister was due to marry the French heir but their grandmother, Eleanor of Aquitaine, preferred Blanche. Louis died in 1226, leaving his young son as king. Blanche shrewdly released an imprisoned noble and ceded land to another to keep the peace among France's discontented nobles. She organised armies to protect the interests of her son and became regent once more when he went on crusade.

13 BERENGARIA OF NAVARRE

c1165–1230

Berengaria is known as the only English queen to never have set foot in the country. She was the wife of Richard I, who himself spent little of his reign in England. The eldest daughter of Sancho VI of Navarre, Berengaria was married to Richard in Cyprus, after his betrothal to Alys of France was ended. On the journey to her wedding, Berengaria was shipwrecked off the coast of Cyprus and had to be rescued by Richard after being threatened by the island's ruler. Unusually for a queen, Berengaria accompanied her husband on the Third Crusade, but later returned to France. The royal couple saw very little of each other and had no children. After Richard's death, Berengaria lived in one of her dower properties in Le Mans, though Richard's successor John refused to pay her pension and took much of her property. This was eventually rectified with the accession of Henry III. Berengaria founded the abbey of L'Épau and was buried there after her death, in 1230. ⊙



GET HOOKED

If we've whetted your appetite for all things queenly, why not explore the topic further with our pick of books, films and more

BOOKS

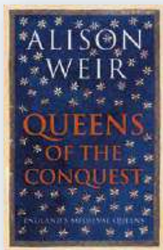
QUEENS AND QUEENSHIP

Elena Woodacre

Queens and Queenship

By Dr Elena Woodacre (ARC Humanities Press, forthcoming, 2021)

Dr Elena Woodacre looks at queenship in a timeless, global sense from the ancient world nearly to the present day, using examples from around the world to understand the expectations of queens and explore three key themes: family, rule and image.



ALISON WEIR

QUEENS OF THE CONQUEST

ENGLAND'S MEDIEVAL QUEENS

Queens of the Conquest: England's Medieval Queens

By Alison Weir (Jonathan Cape, 2017)

Alison Weir strips away centuries of romantic mythology and prejudice to reveal the lives of England's queens in the century after the Norman Conquest – from Matilda of Flanders to Empress Maud.

SHE-WOLVES

HELEN CASTOR

She-Wolves: The Women Who Ruled England Before Elizabeth

By Helen Castor (Harper, 2011)

Helen Castor explores women and power in England, as witnessed through the lives of six females who exercised power against the odds, and one who never got the chance.

BLOG

▶ **Team Queens** Explore global queenship further with this educational history blog, run by a group of enthusiastic historians – including Dr Elena Woodacre, Dr Gabrielle Storey, Katia Wright and Catherine Capel: *teamqueens.org*

History Extra

▶ **For podcasts, features, quizzes, interviews and more on medieval queens, visit the kings and queens hub on our website: *historyextra.com/topic/kings-and-queens***

WATCH

The White Queen

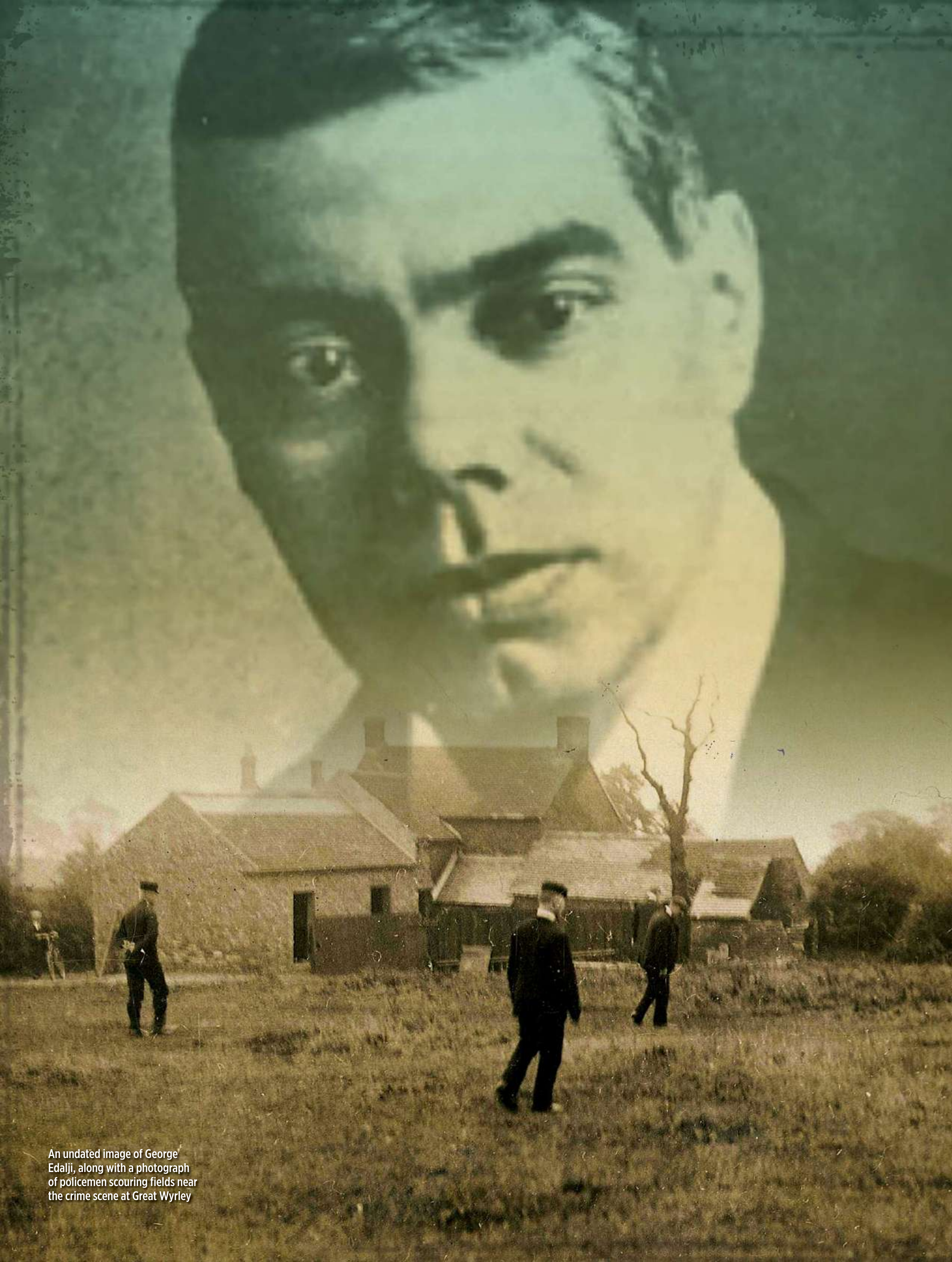
(BBC One, now streaming on Amazon Prime and Google Play)

Follow the stories of the women involved in the Wars of the Roses – the medieval conflict for the throne of England.

She-Wolves: England's Early Queens

(BBC Four, now streaming on Amazon Prime)

Historian Helen Castor explores the lives of seven English queens who challenged male power – from Eleanor of Aquitaine to Isabella of France and Margaret of Anjou.



An undated image of George Edalji, along with a photograph of policemen scouring fields near the crime scene at Great Wyrley

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE AND THE CASE OF GEORGE EDALJI

The Great Wyrley killings of 1903 had all the classic trappings of a Sherlock Holmes story. So when the man convicted of the crimes sought to prove his innocence, it only made sense that he turn to the detective's famous creator, writes **Shrabani Basu**

On a crisp, cold morning in January 1907, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle caught an early morning train from London to Birmingham. Unnoticed by fellow commuters, the writer buried himself in the pages of a newspaper. At Birmingham he changed trains, travelling deeper into the heart of the Midlands. The creator of Sherlock Holmes, the world's most famous detective, was on a mission. His final destination was the small mining village of Great Wyrley. Relieved to stretch his legs after the long journey, he walked briskly to St Mark's Church and knocked on the door of the vicarage.

Reverend Shapurji Edalji and his wife, Charlotte, received Conan Doyle gratefully. Shapurji was a Parsee convert to Christianity, had arrived in Britain from Bombay and was the first vicar of Indian origin in Britain. His wife was English. Over breakfast, the weary vicar told Conan Doyle of the troubles that his family had endured over the last few years. The author was moved to hear their story. A few weeks ago, he had met their son, George, in a London hotel. Thirty-year-old George had been a successful solicitor in Birmingham until his life turned upside down.

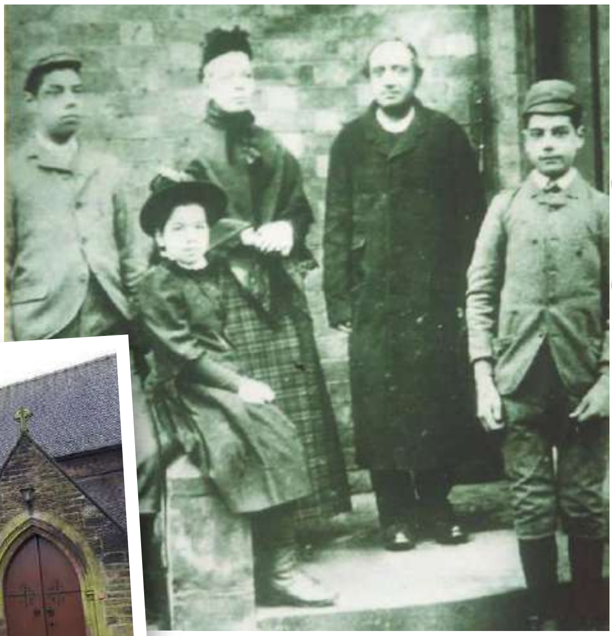
In 1903, the village of Great Wyrley became the centre of a series of brutal crimes as horses, pit ponies and cows were mutilated and left to die. Horrified villagers found their animals lying in the fields, their innards spilling out on the clay soil. Death was the only way to put the animals out of their agony, and Great Wyrley came to be known as the 'village of fear'. Every attack followed the same pattern: the killer came in the dead of night, slashed the animals and left silently. The local police were clueless. Farmers locked up their cattle at night and children were told not to go out after dark. The police increased their surveillance, to no effect. The 'Wyrley Ripper' carried on his deeds.

As the crimes against the animals continued, the macabre tale took a further sinister twist. Anonymous letters were sent to the police, taunting them. They were also sent to the vicarage and to a few other locals. The letters mentioned a gang of killers, who were working on full-moon nights. One of the members of the gang was named as George Edalji. Letters were written in the name of a schoolboy called Wilfred Greatorex. Some of them were written to George.

The police started watching the vicar's son. The quiet and shy solicitor had a studious reputation. He was known to have won medals at university and had written a book on railway law. George lived a mundane life at the vicarage. Every morning he caught the train to his office in Birmingham and returned home in the evening. He did not drink, was never seen at the local alehouse and

▶

The vicarage at Great Wyrley, which received a personal visit from Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in January 1907



ABOVE: **Reverend Edalji and his wife, Charlotte, pictured in 1892 with their children George, Maud and Horace**

LEFT: **St Mark's Church in Great Wyrley, where the elder Edalji served as vicar from 1876 until his death in 1918**

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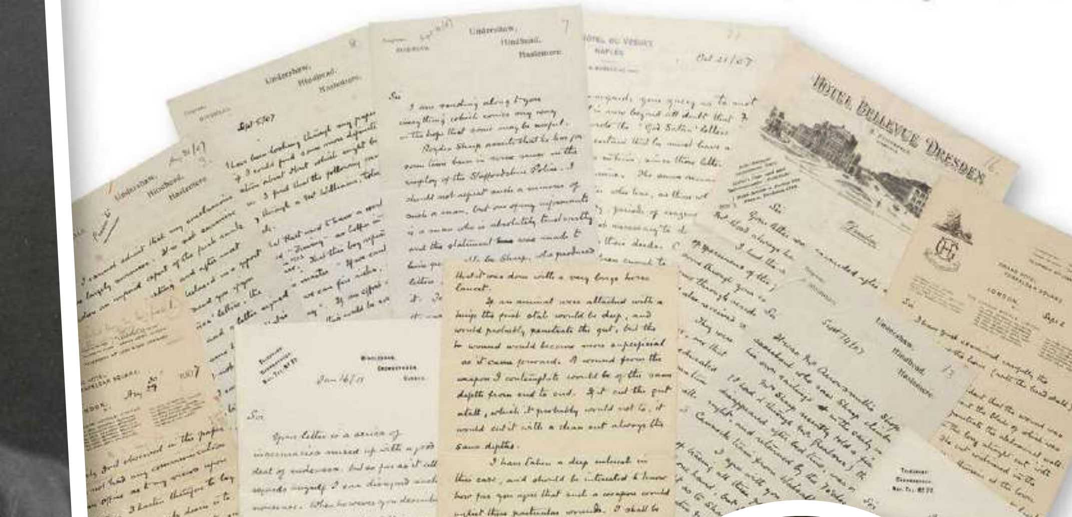
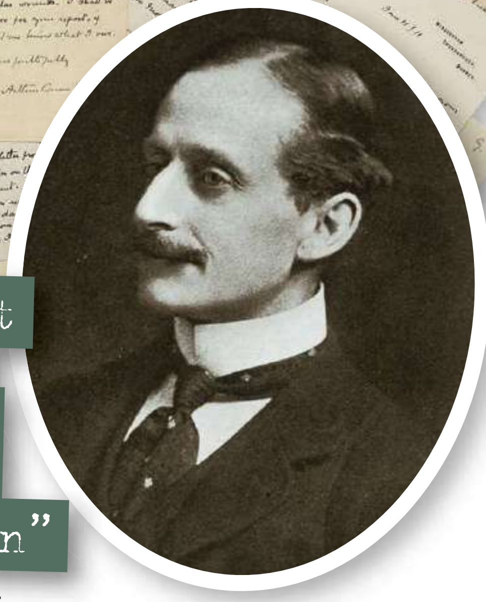




> “Though born, brought up and baptised in England, George was seen as a foreigner with a strange religion”

ABOVE LEFT: **Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Solving the killings in Great Wyrley became a personal crusade**

ABOVE: **A selection of the many letters Conan Doyle wrote to police, protesting George Edalji’s innocence**

ABOVE RIGHT: **Local police chief GA Anson was deeply irritated by the author’s efforts to intervene in the case**

PORTSMOUTH HISTORY CENTRE, PORTSMOUTH LIBRARY X2, BONHAMS/BNPS X1, TRUSTEES OF THE WILLIAM SALT LIBRARY X1, STAFFORDSHIRE RECORDS OFFICE X1, GETTY IMAGES X1, EXPRESS-AND-STAR X1

◀ generally kept to himself. The police casually questioned George about the letters he had received and continued to watch the vicarage.

Early on the morning of 18 August, young miner Henry Garrett was walking to the start of his shift at the Great Wyrley Colliery when he found a horse limping in the field. It had been slashed. He raised the alarm and terrified villagers once again hurried to the spot. This time the police did not wait. They rounded on George Edalji and arrested him at his office in Birmingham. They went to the vicarage and removed a coat, a pair of boots and a razor. The coat, they said, had horse hairs on it, while the boots were wet and the razor displayed evidence of being used as a weapon. George protested that he had not left the house that night. He was not wearing the coat either, as he never wore it outdoors. Nor did he use a razor to shave – he always went to the barbers. None of it convinced the police.

GETTING ON THE CASE

The trial took place over four days in Stafford in a low court ill-equipped to deal with such a serious crime. It took just 50 minutes for the jury to pronounce George guilty and the judge sentenced him to seven years’ penal servitude. Yet the flawed trial drew the attention of top legal experts and a petition to release George gathered more than 10,000 signatures. Eventually, he was released on parole three years later. But the crime still hung over his head and he remained barred from practising as a solicitor.

In desperation, George wrote to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the creator of the best detective of Victorian England. He had read his novels while in prison and been impressed. George felt that only Conan Doyle wearing the hat of Holmes could solve the crime and save him.

Conan Doyle received George’s plea at a time when he himself was going through a dark period in his life. His wife, Louise (affectionately known as ‘Touie’), had died a few months earlier from tuberculosis. The tragedy of her death was mixed with guilt, as he had fallen in love with another woman while she was ill. He was now free to marry Jean Leckie, but he felt he was living under a shadow. The Edalji case, and the championing of a cause for a downtrodden family, would be something to lift him from his gloom. A grave miscarriage of justice had occurred, and the author was ready to take the fight to the powers that be.

Conan Doyle invited George to meet him at the Grand Hotel in London’s Charing Cross. The writer was late and spotted George waiting for him in the lobby. As the only Indian man in the room, Conan Doyle recognised him instantly. He also knew at once that George could not be the criminal. He was holding his newspaper close to his eyes and was clearly severely myopic. The night of 17 August had been wild and windy, and Conan Doyle surmised that a man with such poor vision could not have crossed the dark fields at night in the heavy rain. Conan Doyle had deduced important facts about George Edalji before he had even spoken to him, just as Holmes did in his books.

“Are you astigmatic?” the writer asked George.

“Yes,” he confirmed. The critical fact had not been brought up at the trial.

As Conan Doyle listened sympathetically, asking pertinent questions, George told him about the trial, the incompetence of the judge in directing the jury, and the inconsistent and flawed evidence provided against him. Moreover, the cattle killings had continued after he was in jail. A man had confessed but was not charged.

The media had whipped up a frenzy about the “dark Oriental” and his strange faith. Many believed that Parsees, who worshipped the fire and the Sun, regularly carried out nocturnal sacrifices of animals. Though born, brought up and baptised in England, George was seen as a foreigner with a strange religion.

For Conan Doyle, the game was afoot. He had George’s eyes tested professionally, travelled to Great Wyrley to visit the scene of the crime, and interviewed the locals. Finally, he called on the chief constable of the Staffordshire police, the aristocratic Captain GA Anson, who had no love for the Indian vicar and his family. The meeting left Conan Doyle convinced that Anson was a racist.

ANONYMOUS THREATS

On 11 January 1907, Conan Doyle published the first of his articles about the George Edalji case in *The Daily Telegraph*. It caused a sensation. “England soon rang with the wrongs of George Edalji,” remarked Conan Doyle. The articles were reproduced across Britain and across the Atlantic, making George famous around the world. Fellow authors such as JM Barrie, Bram Stoker and George Bernard Shaw all lauded Conan Doyle for taking up the cause.

With forensic precision and with all the art and mastery of Holmes, Conan Doyle threw out the case, pointing out errors at every stage of the trial. Every exhibit – from the wet boots and coat to the razor – was shown to be thoroughly inappropriate to be even admitted in court, let alone secure a conviction. Evidence from ophthalmologists was cited as evidence that George could not have made the mile-and-a-half journey across the fields in the dark. Nor could he have written the anonymous letter.

But there was more. Conan Doyle revealed something that had not been brought up at the trial at all. It was the grim story of the persecution of the Edaljis by a torrent of anonymous letters, hoaxes and threats for decades. The first of the letters had arrived in 1888 when George was a mere 12-year-old schoolboy.

The missives had soon escalated in tone. Obscene drawings of the vicar and George were left outside the vicarage, graffiti was daubed on the walls and excreta thrown in through the window. The letter-writer repeatedly threatened to kill George. The police were called, but to no avail. When a large key belonging to Walsall Grammar School was mysteriously left at the vicarage door, the police sergeant blamed George (by then 17 years old).

Though not a shred of evidence was produced, it brought George to the attention of Captain Anson, the head of the Staffordshire police. Anson was convinced that George was guilty, had written the anonymous letters himself, and that the “Hindoo vicar” of Great Wyrley was lying to protect him. Anson declared that he would seek penal servitude for the culprit when he was eventually identified.

IN SEARCH OF THE TRUTH

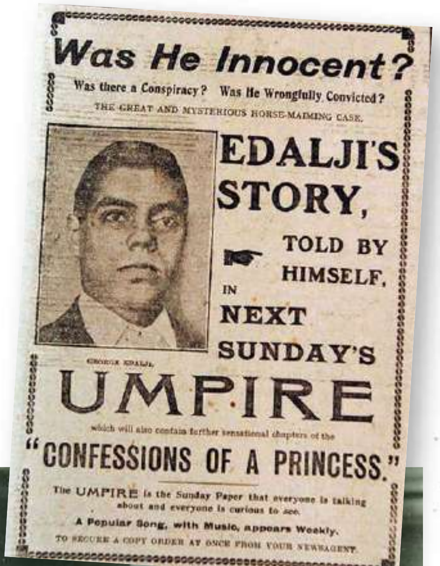
The stage had thus always been set for George’s arrest, said Conan Doyle. The writer became the conscience of the nation, revealing how racism, incompetence and prejudice had led to George’s conviction. Conan Doyle went so far as to compare the Edalji case to the Dreyfus affair in France, which had revealed the anti-Semitic attitude of the French army. To Conan Doyle the cases were similar. In France it had happened with a Jew; in England it had happened to a Parsee.

The Home Office was forced to appoint a committee to look into the case. They granted a pardon to George, but offered no compensation, concluding that he had written the anonymous letters and brought the trouble on himself.

Conan Doyle was incensed. “Either the man is innocent and deserves compensation, or he is guilty of the crime and deserves punishment,” he thundered. Over the next year, he stepped up his campaign. Until then, he had focused on proving that George had not done the deed. He now began an investigation into the real criminal. It led to major rows with Anson, who did not want to be taught policing by a popular writer. Anson even went to the extent of laying false trails to trip up Conan Doyle, and made it a personal feud.

It would be the only case that Conan Doyle investigated himself. But, he too, made mistakes, and the Home Office refused to reopen the files. And what became of George Edalji? Thanks to the efforts of Conan Doyle, he was eventually readmitted on to the Solicitors Roll and started practising in London, but he never returned to his home in Great Wyrley. His case led to the establishment of the Court of Criminal Appeal in 1907, but Edalji himself was largely forgotten. The mystery of the ‘Wyrley Ripper’ would remain unsolved. ⊙

SHRABANI BASU is a bestselling author and journalist. Her books include *Victoria & Abdul* (The History Press, 2010), which was made into a feature film



Was He Innocent?

Was there a Conspiracy? Was He Wrongfully Convicted?

THE GREAT AND MYSTERIOUS HORSE-MAIMING CASE.

EDALJI'S STORY, TOLD BY ☛ HIMSELF, IN NEXT SUNDAY'S

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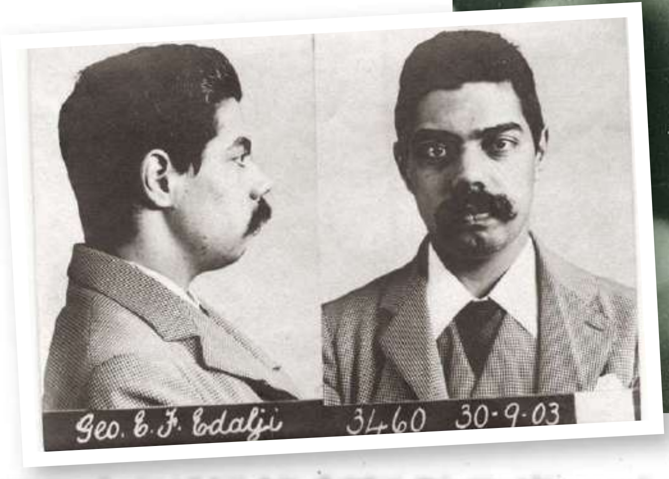
ABOVE RIGHT: **The story attracted a flurry of press attention, but George Edalji remains largely forgotten today**

MAIN: **A photograph from the trial at Stafford Quarter Sessions, which was ill-equipped to deal with the case**

BELOW: **Edalji’s 1903 police mugshot. The lawyer spent three years in prison before being released on parole**



Originally positioned outside Florence town hall, *David* now stands inside the world-famous Galleria dell'Accademia

> “When *David* was unveiled in 1504, everyone knew they looked upon a masterpiece”

LEFT: **Michelangelo's *Pietà*, which depicts Christ in the arms of the Virgin Mary, is the only work that the Renaissance icon ever signed**

FAR LEFT: **Completed in 1541, *The Last Judgment* adorns the altar wall of the Sistine Chapel, below the ceiling the artist painted 25 years earlier**

GETTY IMAGES X5

MICHELANGELO: RENAISSANCE MAN

From his statue of David to the paintings that adorn the walls and ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, Michelangelo's work still inspires awe. **Jonny Wilkes** explores the life of the Italian genius

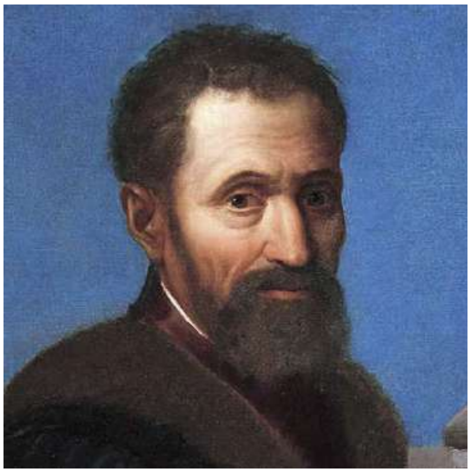
It was not only his seemingly boundless genius that made Michelangelo a true master of Renaissance art, equalled perhaps by Leonardo da Vinci and Raphael alone. He also worked his way into the world of the rich and powerful of Italy. With them as patrons, Michelangelo di Lodovico Buonarroti Simoni carved out an enviable reputation – he would be the first Western artist with a biography published in his own lifetime, and he actually had two – and a career that took him to the very heights of the church.

Michelangelo had the fortune to grow up in late 15th-century Florence, the cradle of the Renaissance, where his talent could be nurtured. At 13, he became an apprentice to renowned painter Domenico Ghirlandaio, which quickly brought him to the attention of Lorenzo de' Medici, ruler of the Florentine Republic and passionate art patron. Living in the palace, Michelangelo could study the Medici art collection, including pieces of antiquity, and discovered his love of sculpting.

Following the downfall of the Medici in Florence in the 1490s, Michelangelo found work in Bologna and for cardinals in Rome. The young sculptor had impressed them with his skills after dabbling in art fraud – making a figure of Cupid and treating the marble to pass it off as ancient – earning a commission for a large statue of Bacchus, the Roman god of wine. Another cardinal then requested a *Pietà* (the Virgin Mary holding the body of Jesus). It would be the only piece Michelangelo signed, adding his name across Mary's chest because he was afraid another artist would get the credit.

MARVELS IN MARBLE

In 1501, the 26-year-old Michelangelo received his most challenging commission to date. It was a project back in Florence that had dragged on for nearly 40 years and been abandoned by other sculptors: a huge statue of the biblical king David for the cathedral. Michelangelo had to use the original block of marble, dubbed 'The Giant', which had been lying idle for decades and was covered in imperfections. It took more than two years to complete, but when unveiled in 1504 everyone knew they looked upon a masterpiece. David had defeated a giant once again.


Painter, sculptor, architect, visionary: an early 17th-century depiction of Michelangelo, completed after his death

David showed Michelangelo's unparalleled ability to sculpt the human form – his knowledge of human anatomy had been enhanced by dissecting cadavers – and his gift for expressions, giving life to blocks of stone. With no chance of raising the five-metre-high statue, which weighed more than six tons, to the cathedral roof, a group of Florentine citizens, among them Leonardo da Vinci, chose to install *David* outside the town hall to stand as a symbol of Florence.

Michelangelo was now one of the most celebrated artists in Renaissance Italy. He took on hugely ambitious projects in Florence before Pope Julius II summoned him with a commission of 40 life-sized statues for his ostentatious tomb. Michelangelo threw himself into the work, but the project suddenly came to a halt over a dispute about payment. When he was persuaded to return to the Vatican, the pope offered Michelangelo another task entirely: to paint the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel.

The opportunity to adorn this most consecrated of spaces did not appeal to the deeply devout Michelangelo, however, and he much preferred sculpting to fresco painting. He agreed to the work but instead of sticking to the commission – to depict the 12 apostles – he chose to fill every inch with dramatic scenes from Genesis, from the creation to Adam and Eve to Noah. Prophets, sibyls (female oracles of Ancient Greece) and the ancestors of Christ would line the ceiling.

For four years, from 1508-12, Michelangelo painted – often alone, spending countless hours in uncomfortable, contorted positions on a scaffold of his own design, and with the paintings growing more complex as he went along. In all, he added more than 300 figures. As anyone who has seen the Sistine Chapel can attest, the finished ceiling was a transcendent success; a work of such beauty and importance that it could seemingly be more of God's hand than a man.

SCULPTING A LEGACY

During a period of religious schism, Reformation and Counter-Reformation, Michelangelo remained at the centre of the Catholic Church for the next five decades, working under nine popes and producing an exquisite array of art. For Julius's – scaled-down – tomb he sculpted a statue of Moses; he began his forays into architecture with the Medici Chapel and Laurentian Library in Florence; and, passing 60 years old, added to the Sistine Chapel by painting *The Last Judgment* on its huge altar wall.

From the 1540s onwards, Michelangelo dedicated much of his time to architecture in Rome, designing the Piazza del Campidoglio at the top of Capitoline Hill and getting construction going on the now-famed dome of St Peter's Basilica, where, incidentally, his *Pietà* stands to this day. Michelangelo continued working up until his death in 1564, a few weeks before turning 89. His body was returned to his beloved Florence – the cradle of the Renaissance, and now the grave of the ultimate Renaissance man. ⊙

Michelangelo designed the magnificent dome of St Peter's Basilica

IMAGES OF INDEPENDENCE

In 1958, photographer Todd Webb was tasked by the United Nations to document images of industrial progress in Africa. What he found was a continent in flux: calls for independence were growing ever louder, while the grip of imperialism was steadily weakening. Webb's extraordinary images – some of which are shown here – have recently been published in a new book.

WORDS: CHARLOTTE HODGMAN

In 1956, Sudan became the first sub-Saharan African country to gain independence from its European colonists (Britain/Egypt). By the time New York photographer Todd Webb touched down in Lomé, in what was then French Togoland (now Togo), on 16 April 1958, three more African nations – Morocco, Tunisia and Ghana – had followed suit. Africa was a continent in a state of immense transition – and more was to come.

Webb's five-month UN commission was to document industry, technology and modernisation in what were then nine African nations that would later be known as: Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania and Togo. His images captured mining, thriving seaports, power stations, and other industrial scenes, but also caught the mood of independence that was sweeping the continent, and, at times, contradicted common, preconceived notions of Africa, documenting its nations not as 'underdeveloped' but as part of a shifting and modernising continent. His images range from the first full-suffrage election in what would become Togo, to racial segregation in Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) and Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), lush natural landscapes and flourishing urban centres.

Despite the large number of photographs taken during Webb's trip – more than 1,500 in total – only 22 images were published by the United Nations Office of Public Information. The remaining images were lost until a steamer trunk containing more than 170 rolls of film, black and white vintage prints, Webb's Africa journal, and souvenir ephemera, was rediscovered in 2017.

Over the next five pages, we bring you a selection of images from Webb's 1958 trip...

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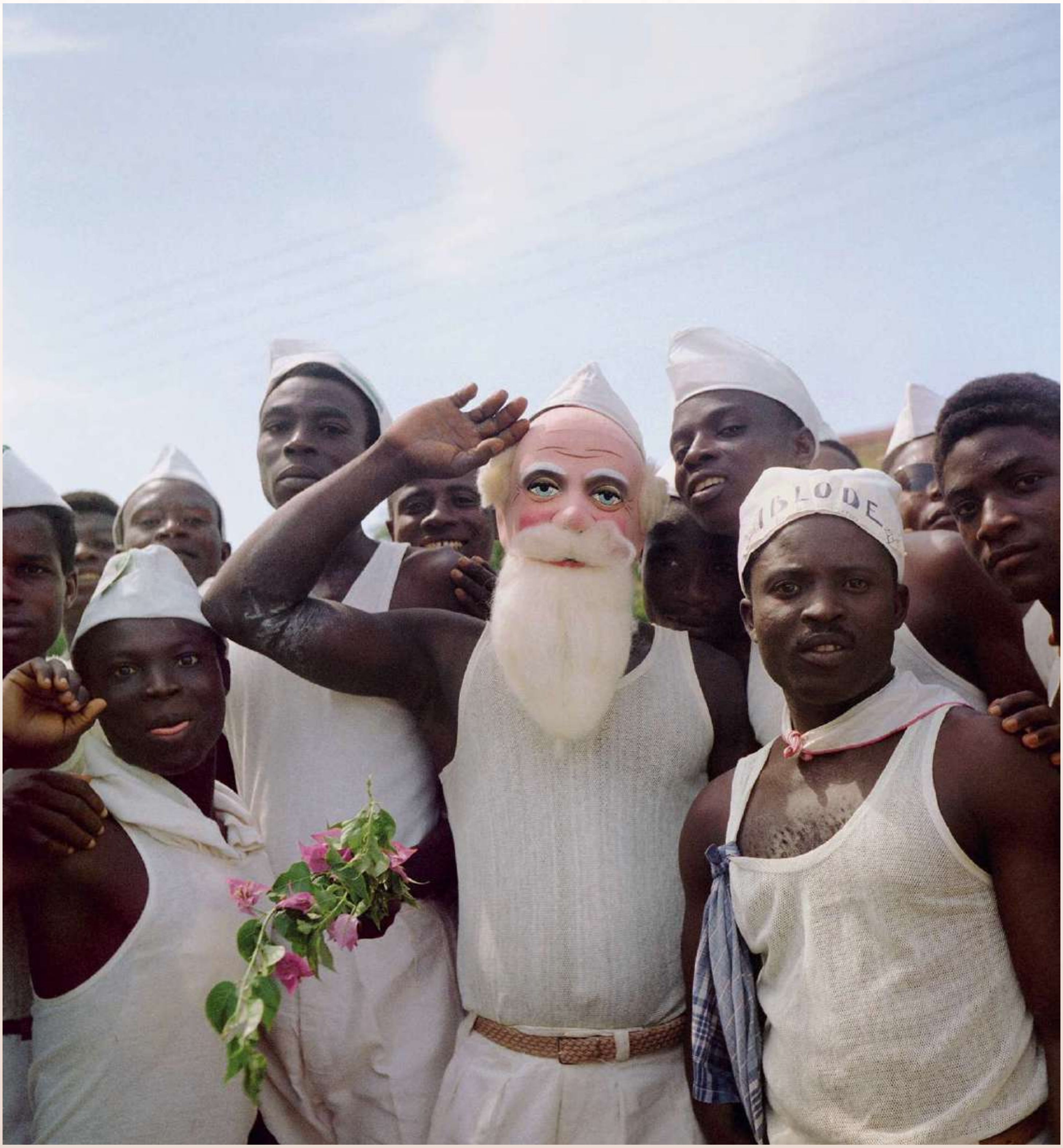
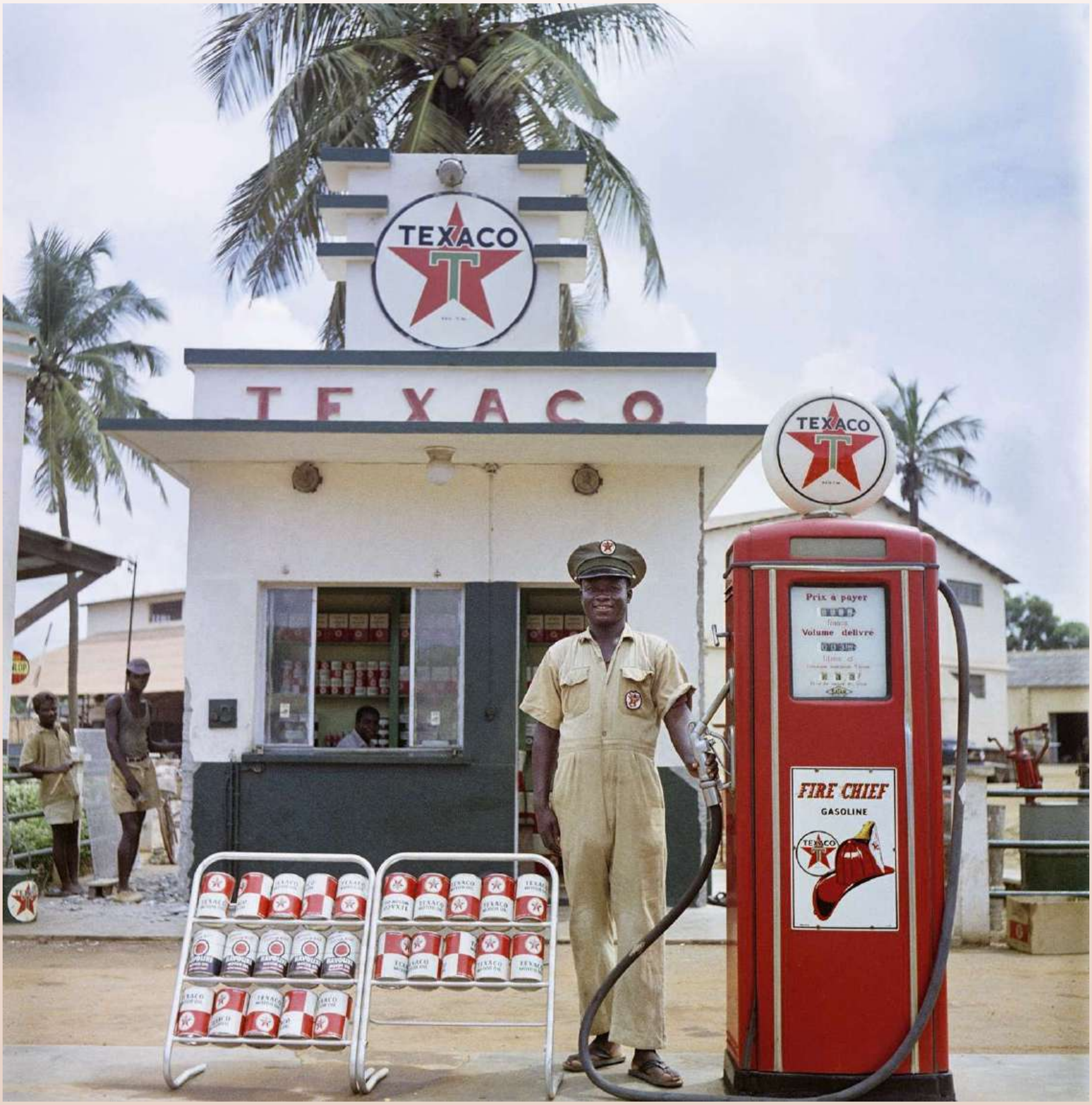


▲ A group of men – one wearing a hat bearing the slogan 'Ablode' ('freedom') and another sporting a Santa Claus mask – on the future Togo's first full suffrage election day. "The country is in ecstasy," recorded Webb in his journal. "The opposition has won a landslide victory and now Togo is virtually free. I feel that I have seen history made." Two years later, on 27 April 1960, Togo gained independence from France.

▶

▼ "This image expresses both the shiny capitalism of the 1950s and the inequities of the colonial era," write Aimée Bessire and Erin Hyde Nolan, authors of *Todd Webb in Africa: Outside the Frame.*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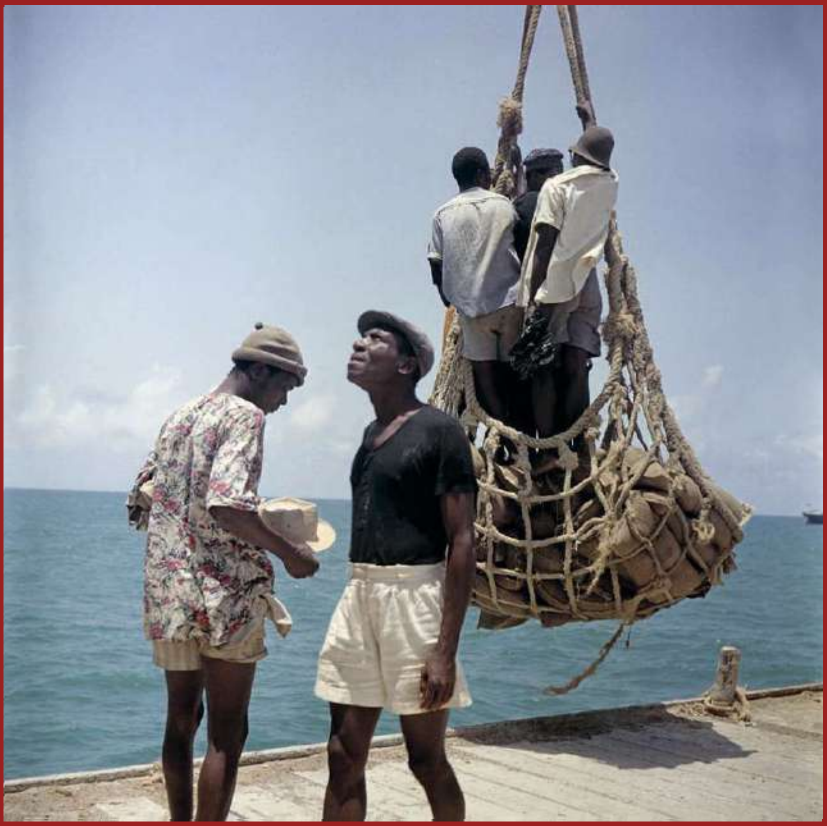
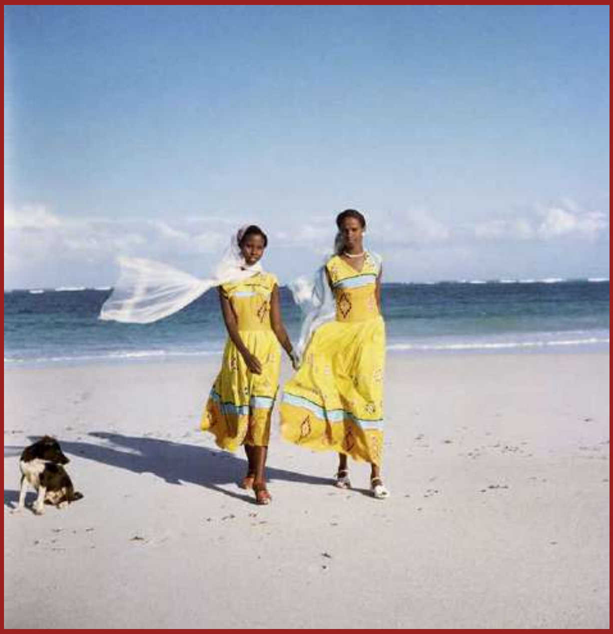
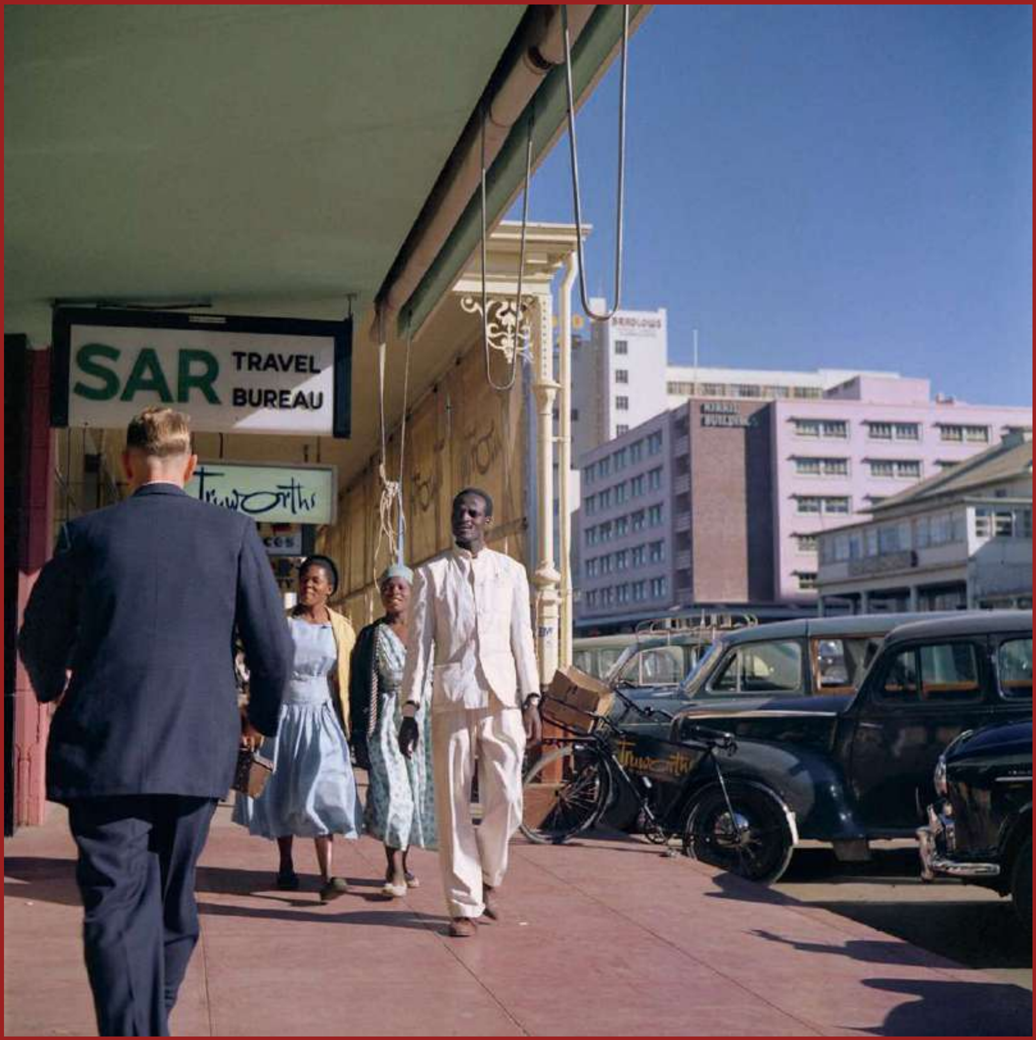


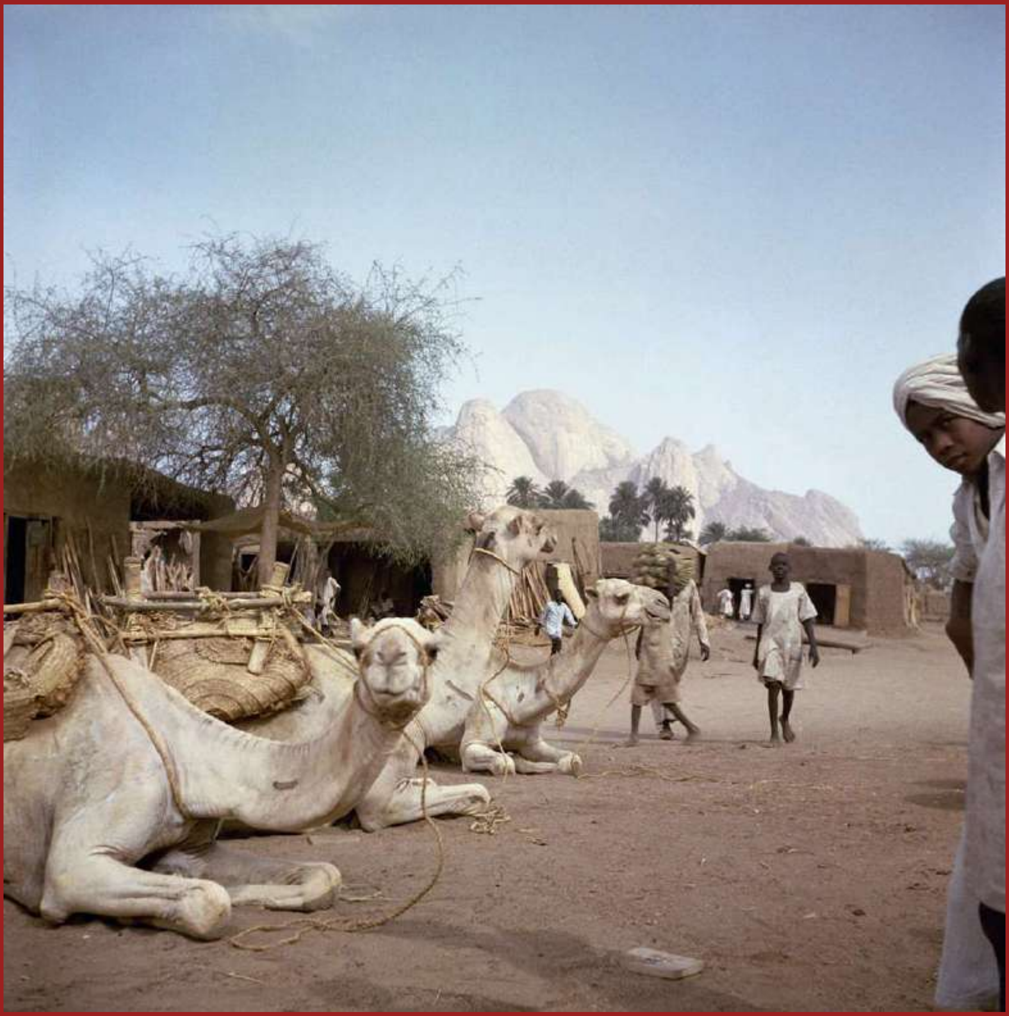


▲ This image was taken on one of Webb's favourite beaches in what would later be Somalia. In 1958 the country was on the cusp of independence – the unification of the Trust Territory of Somaliland and the State of Somaliland would take place in July 1960.

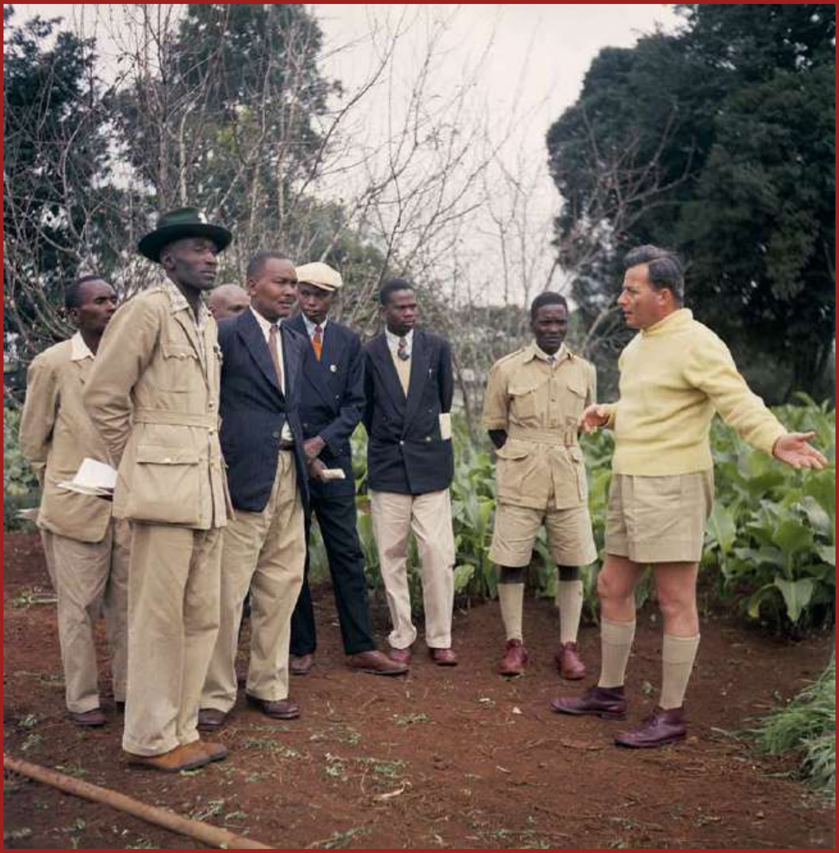
▲ Men load and unload goods at the harbour in Lomé, the capital of then-French Togoland and the first scheduled stop on Todd Webb's African tour.



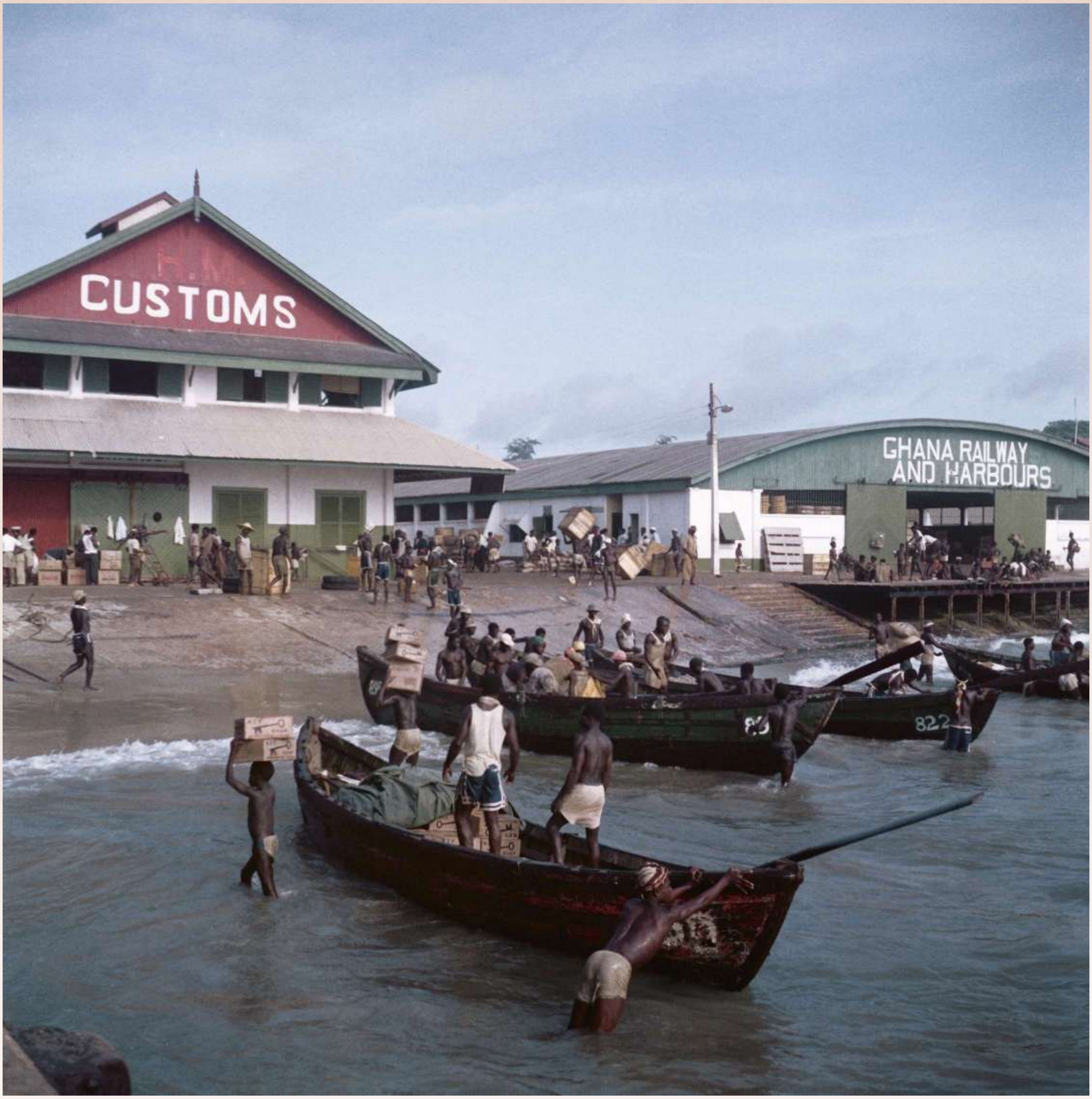
▶ Pedestrians walk past a SAR Travel Bureau and other shops in Bulawayo, Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe). Webb spent two weeks in Southern Rhodesia and Northern Rhodesia (Zambia), and recorded in his journal the racial segregation that shaped his experiences of these places.



◀ Camels at rest with the Kassala hills (in eastern Sudan) in the background. In a journal entry recorded on 27 May 1958, Webb writes: "Kassala is most interesting – the most exciting place I have seen in Sudan. It is a meeting place for the nomad camel-raising tribes of the desert and with its mountain background it has colour." In May, when Webb was visiting, the average high temperature can reach 106 degrees Fahrenheit.



▶A group of Kenyan farmers visit a British colonial-run farm in July 1958 – an image captured more than five years before full Kenyan independence – to "gain better insight into the operation of a small European farm".



▲ Men unload cargo in Ghana's Accra harbour with the Customs House in the background. On 8 May 1958, Webb wrote in his diary: "Have had quite an exciting three days in Ghana. Much too much to do here for a 10-day stay. Seems to me that Ghana is a going concern. Much progress has been made since Independence Day". ⊙

GET HOOKED

READ
Todd Webb in Africa: Outside the Frame, by Aimée Bessire and Erin Hyde Nolan, is on sale now, published by Thames & Hudson

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WHAT IF...

THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS ESCALATED?

Jonny Wilkes talks to **Professor Mark White** about how the world stood on the brink of World War III and nuclear Armageddon – all it needed was a single push

The Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962 was just one rash judgement, one communication breakdown, or one incident getting out of control from turning the Cold War hot – and risking a nuclear war that would change the fate of the entire world in the 20th century. The Soviets had clandestinely deployed nuclear missiles to Communist-friendly Cuba to level the playing field against the US, which had placed Jupiter missiles on the Soviet Union's doorstep in Turkey.

When the US discovered the presence of a medium-and intermediate-range ballistic missile launch sites under construction just 90 miles from Florida, tensions immediately began to rise. President John F Kennedy convened a special group of senior advisers, the Executive Committee of the National Security Council (ExComm) to decide on a course of action – from doing nothing to an invasion. On 22 October, JFK declared a naval quarantine of Cuba.

While the Soviet leadership, under Nikita Khrushchev, could order their ships bound for Cuba to sail through the quarantine, they knew they would be at a severe disadvantage if war broke out and escalated into a nuclear shootout. Mark White, professor of history at Queen Mary University of London and author of *The Cuban Missile Crisis*, says: "The US had a huge lead in terms of nuclear weapons in the early 1960s. It wasn't until the 1970s that the Soviets roughly achieved parity in the Cold War."

But so many things could have led to the escalation of the Cuban Missile Crisis. The U-2 spy plane that took the photographs of the missile launch sites on 14 October could have been delayed, meaning the information came later and JFK's decisions had to be more rushed. Or, despite Khrushchev's concerns, Soviet ships could have ignored the cordon and forced a response.

The most perilous incident on the blockade line came on 27 October, when two US destroyers, USS *Beale* and USS *Cony*, intercepted a Soviet sub and dropped 'signalling' depth charges. If the captain, who had launch capability, had not listened to his level-headed officer, Vasily Arkhipov, then there just may have been a nuke in the air.

A breakdown in communications; a failure in diplomatic efforts; or JFK giving in to the hawks in ExComm had the potential to escalate the situation. The moment the President could have snapped was the shooting down of a U-2 spy plane over Cuba, killing the pilot Major Rudolf Anderson. White asserts, though, that JFK was "very good at crisis management, as seen in Berlin in 1961 and periodic civil rights crises. He tended to keep cool and calm."

Both superpower leaders demonstrated caution and willingness to negotiate. On 26 October, JFK received an offer to withdraw the missiles if the US promised not to invade Cuba, followed by another deal demanding the removal of US missiles from Turkey, which was agreed to in secret. "A big question is what JFK would have done had Khrushchev got back to him on the 28th adjusting the deal so that the removal of US missiles was a public part of the settlement," says White. "Would JFK have accepted that, if it meant the world would have known about the concession?"

THINGS GET HEATED

If not, or if another of the myriad possible catalysts had led to an outbreak of hostilities, then JFK would have likely ordered air strikes on strategic targets in Cuba, followed by an invasion. "The US

IN CONTEXT

On 14 October 1962, a US spy plane obtained photographic evidence that nuclear missiles had been secretly shipped to Cuba, and that the Soviets were building medium-and intermediate-range launch sites. The US, even with an overwhelming nuclear superiority, could not tolerate anything this close – with Cuba just 90 miles from Florida – so President John F Kennedy and his advisory body, ExComm, considered a number of responses.

In a television address on 22 October, JFK announced a naval blockade, or quarantine, and his commitment to retaliation if attacked. It was after days of an agonisingly tense standoff that negotiations eventually prevailed. The 13-day Cuban Missile Crisis resolved with the Soviet ships sailing away and the missiles withdrawn. In return, the US secretly agreed to remove their own missiles from Turkey. It was the most dangerous episode of the Cold War, but the world eventually stepped back from the brink of nuclear Armageddon.

JFK addresses the nation on 22 October 1962

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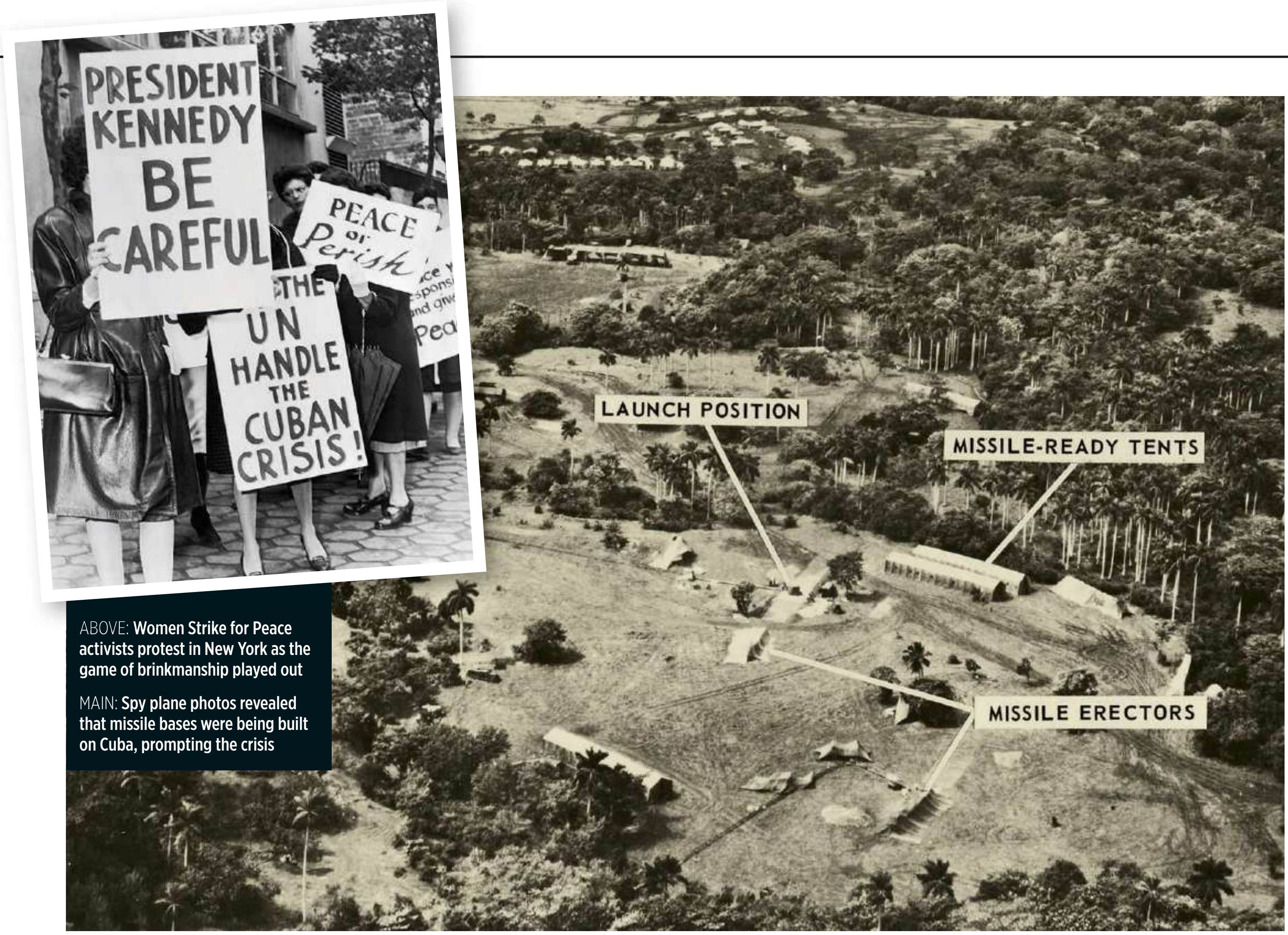

ABOVE: **Women Strike for Peace activists protest in New York as the game of brinkmanship played out**

MAIN: **Spy plane photos revealed that missile bases were being built on Cuba, prompting the crisis**

"THE SOVIET UNION WAS LIKELY TO BE OBLITERATED BY THE SHEER NUMBER OF MISSILES RAINING DOWN"

had developed plans to attack Cuba all the way back to Eisenhower after Fidel Castro's advent to power," says White. "JFK regularly instructed his military to update those plans."

Following air strikes, an amphibious landing in the north – comprising a planned 261,000 troops in 10-15 days – aimed to oust Castro and take control of the country. Pentagon reports released in 2012 show a projection of 18,500 American casualties in the opening days based on the number of troops that the US military believed they faced. "Any invasion would have meant engagement with Soviet troops on the island," says White.

But that projection was flawed. There were more Soviets on Cuba than the US knew about, as well as tactical nukes. Extraordinarily, launch command had been given to field officers, so smaller tactical missiles could have been utilised to halt the invasion. That may have been enough to start an exchange of nuclear weapons. The US would destroy any remaining weapons on Cuba, while risking a retaliatory attack on some of their cities since the Soviets' best hope, due to their nuclear inferiority, was an immediate strike.

The Soviets simultaneously had their eyes on other targets. "Khrushchev could have responded elsewhere, for instance Berlin," says White. An attack there, with conventional forces, would have dragged Europe into a conflict that intensified by the moment. The result: nothing short of World War III and a global nuclear exchange. Of course, calmer heads could still have prevented such a disaster, but at a time of the highest emotions it would be all too plausible that it was already too late.

In the case of nuclear war, the Soviet Union was likely to be obliterated by the sheer number of missiles raining down. The US may have fared better, but major cities would certainly have been destroyed and tens of millions perished. The world we know today would never have been. And while clearly the most extreme alternative history, it all could have come from one man, JFK or Khrushchev, blinking during the Cuban Missile Crisis. ⊙

DID YOU KNOW?

HOT TAKE

In the aftermath of the Crisis, it was clear that changes had to be made so such a near-disaster wouldn't happen again. The hotline between Washington, DC and Moscow was set up to allow direct communication and a partial test ban on nuclear weapons was agreed.

LISTEN

BBC WORLD SERVICE What was it like for ordinary Cubans during the crisis? Find out in this episode of *Witness History:* *bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00bgtq2*

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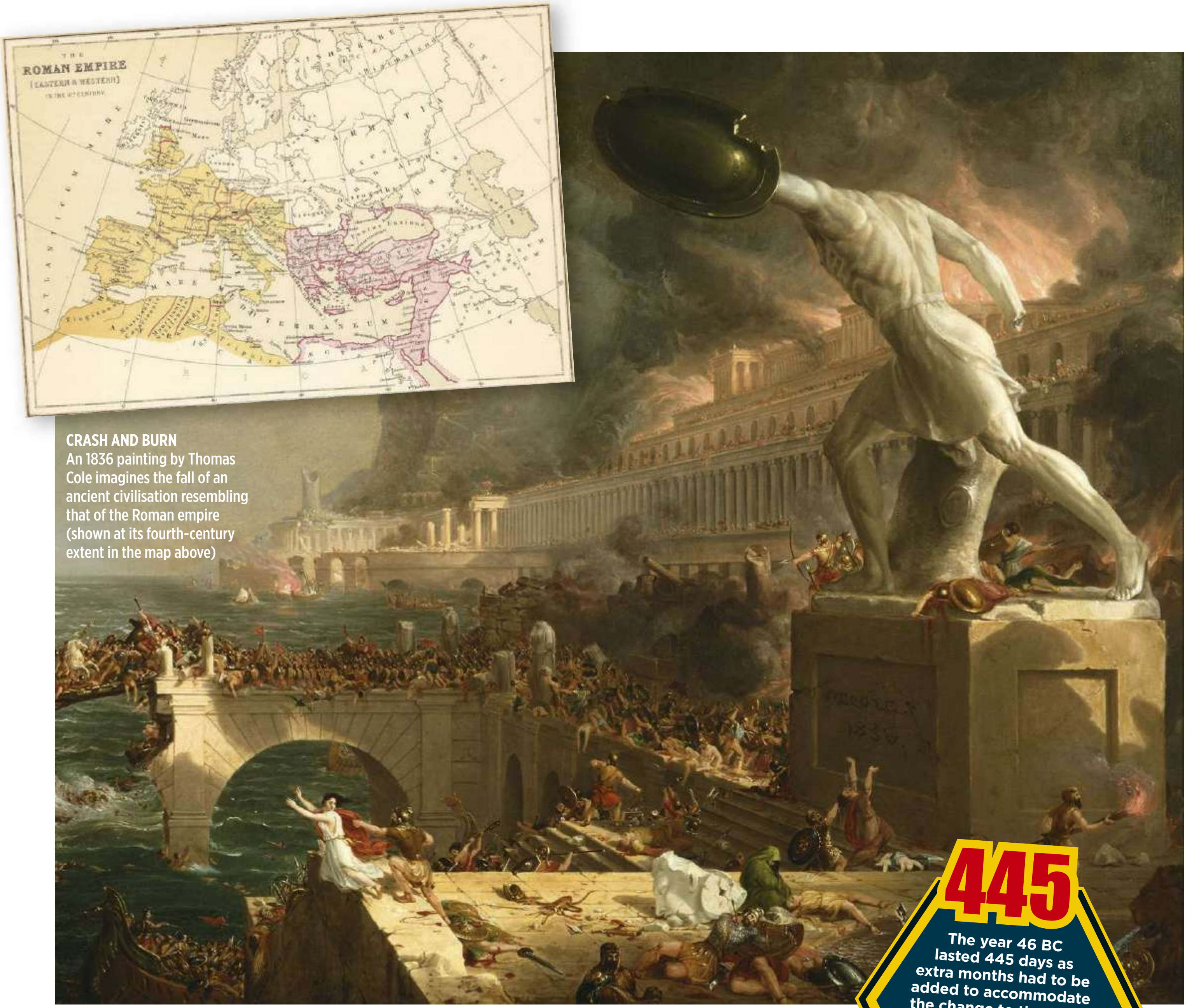
Q&A YOU ASK, WE ANSWER

HISTORY'S GREATEST CONUNDRUMS AND MYSTERIES SOLVED



CRASH AND BURN
An 1836 painting by Thomas Cole imagines the fall of an ancient civilisation resembling that of the Roman empire (shown at its fourth-century extent in the map above)

445

The year 46 BC lasted 445 days as extra months had to be added to accommodate the change to the Julian calendar. It became known as the *ultimus annus confusionis* ('last year of confusion').

When did Rome split?

SHORT ANSWER Decades of deterioration led Emperor Diocletian to make the decisive cut

LONG ANSWER The third century was not a particularly good time for the Roman Empire. Its glory days were firmly behind it and constant fighting, both internal and external, dragged its rulers into political and military chaos. During this so-called 'Crisis of the Third Century', competing interests carved up the land and emperors came and went, with the empire blitzing through at least 26 claimants in just 50 years.

One of the emperors, Aurelian, did successfully manage to unite the Romans, but not for long. When Diocletian later came to power in AD 284, he saw the empire as too unwieldy to rule by himself, so made the decision to choose another man, Maximian, as co-emperor. Then, in AD 293, Diocletian officially split governance by creating the Tetrarchy, where both West and East had a senior emperor, an augustus, and a junior, or caesar.

Beyond two brief stints in the fourth century, when Constantine the Great and later Theodosius I ruled as sole emperor of both halves, the Roman empire was forevermore split. The East, based in Constantinople (formerly Byzantium) thrived thanks to its trade routes, while the West (based in what is now Milan), crumbled until its last emperor, Romulus Augustulus, was deposed in AD 476. The Byzantines would last another thousand years, finally falling to the Ottomans in 1453.

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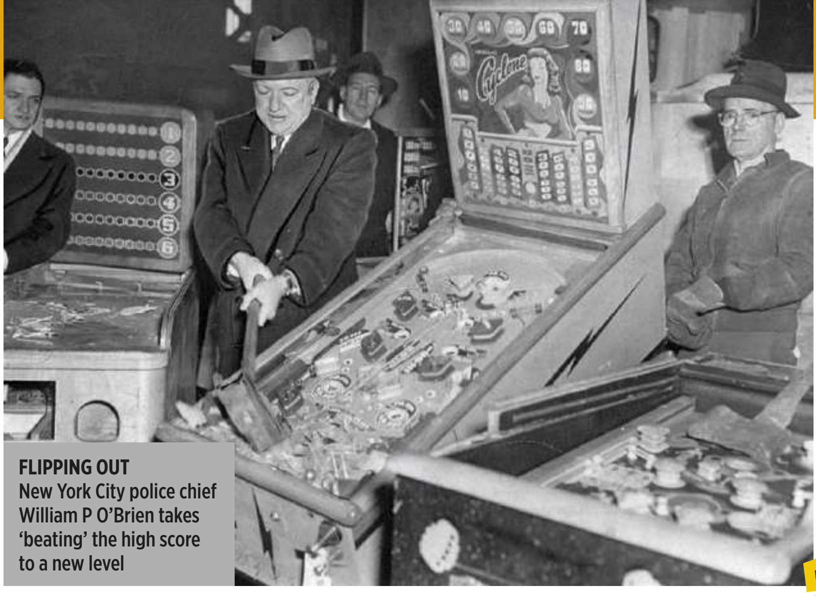


FLIPPING OUT
New York City police chief William P O'Brien takes 'beating' the high score to a new level

Why was pinball banned in some US cities?

SHORT ANSWER Before the bumpers, lights and sounds, pinball had another eye-catching attraction: gambling

LONG ANSWER A prohibition on alcohol, while flawed, can be understood given the health implications and prominence of temperance movements in the US at the time. But what was so wrong about an arcade game?

The issue was that pinball machines were all about chance, especially before the flippers were added in 1947, so attracted illegal gambling. Arcades even served as mafia fronts, it was believed. New York mayor Fiorello La Guardia banned pinball in the 1940s and ordered raids where machines were destroyed with sledgehammers and dumped in rivers. Other cities followed his example.

It was 1976 when Roger Sharpe, magazine writer and expert pinball wizard, was called in by the Amusement and Music Operators Association to play in a courtroom to prove it to be a game of skill as well as chance. Luckily, the ball acted exactly how Sharpe boldly predicted and the pinball prohibition ended.

What is the Lloyds Bank Coprolite?

SHORT ANSWER Sorry, this answer is a pile of poo. No, really

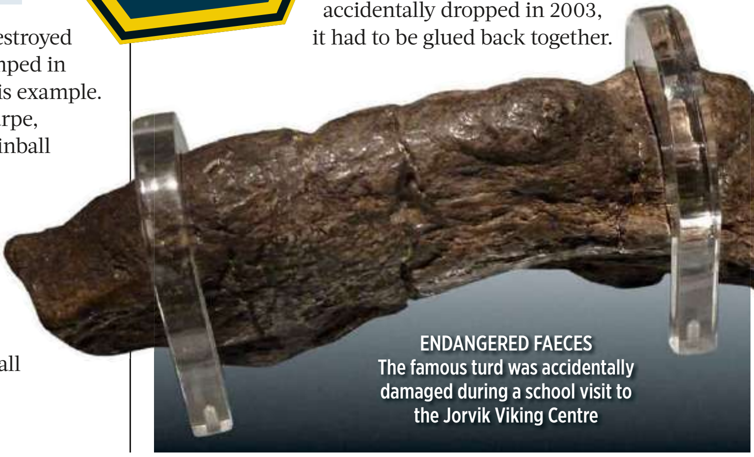
LONG ANSWER Archaeologists in York must hope to unearth any number of treasures from the Viking Age, from decorated axes to stashed hoards. In 1972, however, they got excited about a different find: fossilised faeces.

Discovered underneath a site that later became a branch of Lloyds Bank (hence the name), the preserved ninth-century poo measures 20cm in length, which certainly makes it a substantial 'deposit'. The coprolite was so well preserved that experts were able to determine that the person who produced it ate a diet of meat and bread, and suffered from worms.

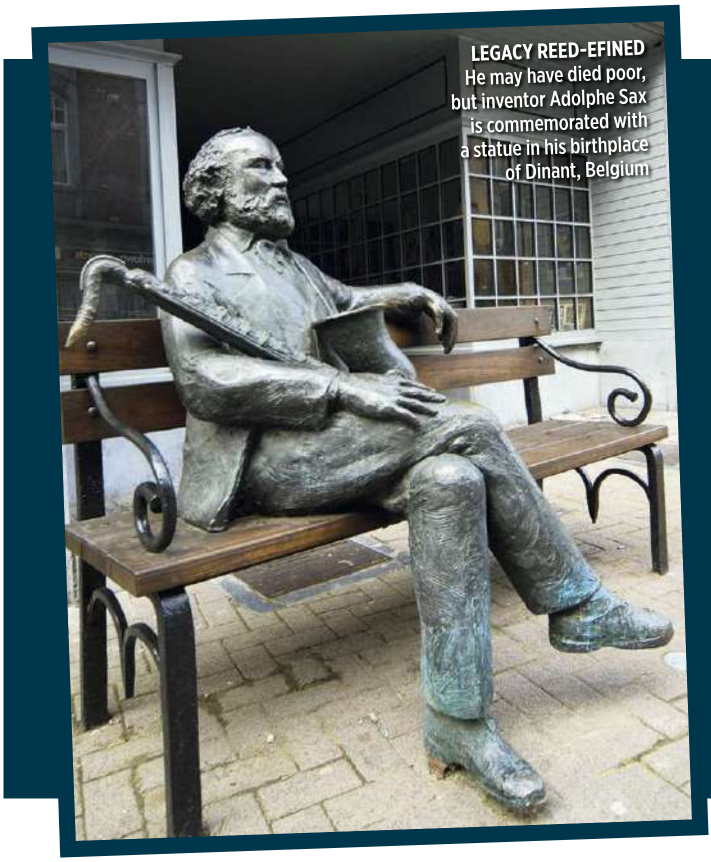
The find was certainly no waste. In the 1990s, the 'crown jewel of stools' was valued in the US at $39,000.When accidentally dropped in 2003, it had to be glued back together.

12

The salaries of English footballers were capped in 1947, meaning they could earn no more than £12 a week (£10 in the summer).



ENDANGERED FAECES
The famous turd was accidentally damaged during a school visit to the Jorvik Viking Centre



LEGACY REED-EFINED
He may have died poor, but inventor Adolphe Sax is commemorated with a statue in his birthplace of Dinant, Belgium

Who invented the saxophone?

SHORT ANSWER Adolphe Sax was so proud of his creation he put his name on it. Not everyone was keen, though

LONG ANSWER The saxophone, a favourite of jazz and the soundtracks of 80s movies, is a somewhat unusual instrument as it has a clear origin and sole inventor.

The musically gifted Adolphe Sax started tinkering with instruments as a boy in Belgium and continued developing his own while living in Paris, France. On 28 June 1846, he took out a patent for his wind-brass hybrid with a single reed, conical tube, finger keys and initially made of wood, which he dubbed the saxophone. Sax clearly liked putting his name on his work as his other instruments include both the saxhorn and saxtuba.

The saxophone was adopted by the French Army bands and earned Sax a teaching position at the Paris Conservatory, but it also made him plenty of enemies among musical purists. He faced criticism, death threats and legal challenges for years, leaving him facing bankruptcy multiple times and dying penniless in 1894.

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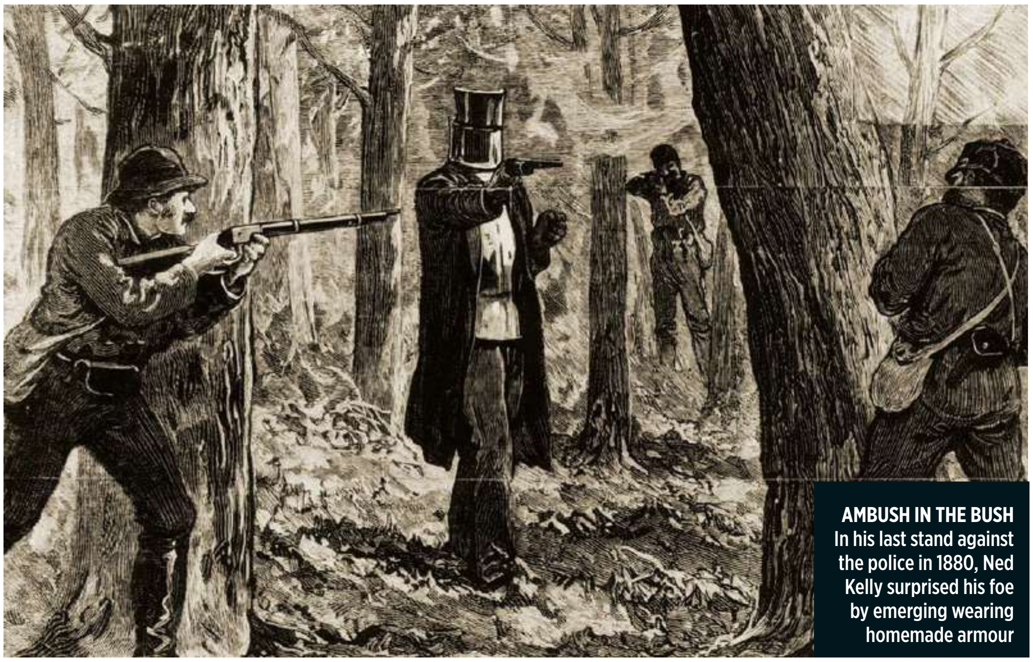


AMBUSH IN THE BUSH
In his last stand against the police in 1880, Ned Kelly surprised his foe by emerging wearing homemade armour

How was Ned Kelly caught?

SHORT ANSWER Even with his bulletproof armour, the Australian bushranger fought the law – and the law won

LONG ANSWER Ned Kelly was a bushranger, bank robber and police killer… and something of a folk hero. In Australia, he and his gang, made up of his brother Dan and friends Joe Byrne and Steve Hart, represented a spirit of independence and an enemy of police persecution, colonial authorities and oppressive landowners.

It meant Australians helped keep the gang hidden despite a tempting £8,000 reward, the largest issued in the British Empire to date. But Kelly grew tired of hiding and devised a plan. In June 1880, the gang killed a police informer and, expecting the law to be hot on their heels, seized the township of Glenrowan, Victoria, to make a stand. They took around 60 hostages in the hotel, ripped up the railway lines carrying the police train, and put on their homemade bulletproof armour – centimetre-thick plates of iron protecting their torsos and a helmet with only thin eye slits.

Dozens of police arrived, having been warned, and in the ensuing firefight the gang members were killed or shot themselves to avoid capture. Kelly emerged from the hotel, appearing like a ghost in his 44kg-armour, and returned fire until being shot in his unprotected legs and hands.

Although a petition for clemency accrued 30,000 signatures, Kelly, aged 25, was hanged on 11 November 1880. Legend has it that his last words were: "Such is life".

DID YOU KNOW?

AVIATION ADVANCES

When Neil Armstrong made his famous journey to the Moon in 1969, he packed fragments of the propeller of the *Wright Flyer* – the first powered aircraft built and successfully tested by the Wright Brothers in 1903.

DEAD FUNNY

Archaeologists at Birmingham's Park Street cemetery have recently discovered a number of skeletons with a brick, marmalade jar and wine glass inside the skulls, thought to be a prank by Victorian medical students.

WORK OF ART

The logo for Chupa Chups lollipops, a daisy shape with the name of the brand inside, was designed by the renowned surrealist artist Salvador Dalí. In 1969, he sketched out the first draft on a newspaper.

BERRY BREAK

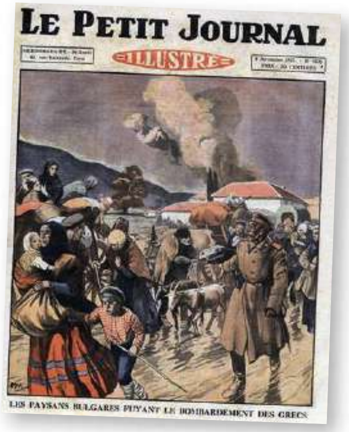
Tea made from blackberries was considered such an effective cure for dysentery that during the American Civil War, a temporary ceasefire could be called to allow soldiers from both sides to pick them – occasionally from the same bush.

How did a stray dog start a war?

SHORT ANSWER The dog in question was not a certain man's best friend

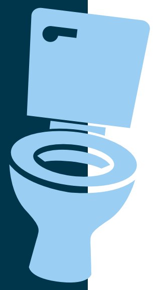
LONG ANSWER Greece and Bulgaria used to be warring rivals, so if a Greek soldier guarding the border lost his dog, the worst place it could run would be Bulgarian territory. Well, that's what supposedly happened in October 1925. The man was shot by his Bulgarian counterparts while chasing after the mutt, resulting in an exchange of gunfire in which a Greek captain also died – having crossed into no man's land under a white flag in a bid to restore order. A Bulgarian apology couldn't prevent escalation as Greece invaded the border town of Petrich, and in the end the League of Nations intervened.

In total, more than 50 died in the Petrich Incident, also called the War of the Stray Dog. There's no record of what happened to the dog, though.


LE PETIT JOURNAL
ILLUSTRÉ
LES PAYSANS BULGARES FUYANT LE BOMBARDEMENT DES GRECS

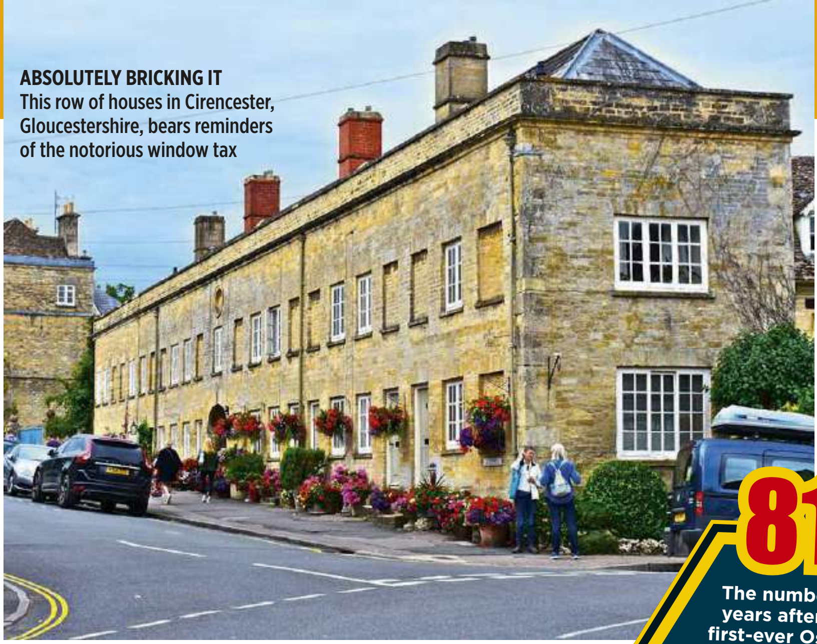
TERROR UNLEASHED
A French newspaper from 1925 depicts Bulgarians fleeing from the Greek attacks

What was the Erfurt Latrine Disaster?



SHORT ANSWER When the words 'latrine' and 'disaster' go together, you know things went badly

LONG ANSWER In July 1184, a meeting of nobles in St Peter's Church in Erfurt, Germany, went down the toilet. It wasn't their failure to resolve a bitter feud – they actually ended up in the toilet. While accounts of the Erfurt Latrine Disaster are scant, it seems the floor gave way and the men fell into the latrine beneath, only for that to collapse too, sending them into the cesspool. As many as 60 drowned. German king Henry VI apparently survived because he was sitting in an alcove within the stone walls.



ABSOLUTELY BRICKING IT This row of houses in Cirencester, Gloucestershire, bears reminders of the notorious window tax

How much money did the window tax make?

SHORT ANSWER A levy on windows became literal daylight robbery as people chose bricks over glass

LONG ANSWER There are hundreds of buildings across Britain displaying the evidence of a historic tax-avoidance scheme: bricked-up windows.

England had a window tax from 1696, imposed by William III, until 1851, and similar levies were introduced in Scotland, Ireland and France over the years. To avoid paying, many homeowners chose to brick up their windows, finding it worthwhile to lose some light and save some cash.

These 'blind windows' didn't save significant amounts, but every penny counted. Initially, the tax comprised a flat rate of two shillings per house, with an extra four shillings added on for houses with more than 10 windows and yet another four shillings for those with at least 20.

The costs changed in 1747. Six pence had to be paid for every window on a house with 10 to 14 windows, increasing to nine pence for 15-19 windows and one shilling for more than 20.

81

The number of years after the first-ever Oscars, in 1929, that a woman won the award for best director: Kathryn Bigelow for *The Hurt Locker*.

When did the Kiplingcotes Derby begin?

SHORT ANSWER A horse race from 1519 is still going strong

LONG ANSWER In 2019, the oldest horse race in England celebrated its 500th anniversary. The Kiplingcotes Derby is a four-mile cross-country track near Market Weighton in the Yorkshire Wolds, held every third Thursday in March and open to any rider ready at the starting post at 11am.

The beloved Derby has a few eccentricities, not least the fact the winner receives a £50 prize while second place gets a share of the entry fees, which is nearly always more than that. Also, it *has* to be run every year. The rules state that if the Derby ever cannot take place then it must never be run again.

To satisfy this stipulation, the organisers have a compromise for more difficult years – having a single rider walk a horse along the route. Understandably, they needed this option, only for the fourth time, in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

PHOTO FINISH A crowd of locals gather to cheer on a jockey at Kiplingcotes Derby c1975, which was first held during the reign of Henry VIII

How was papyrus made?

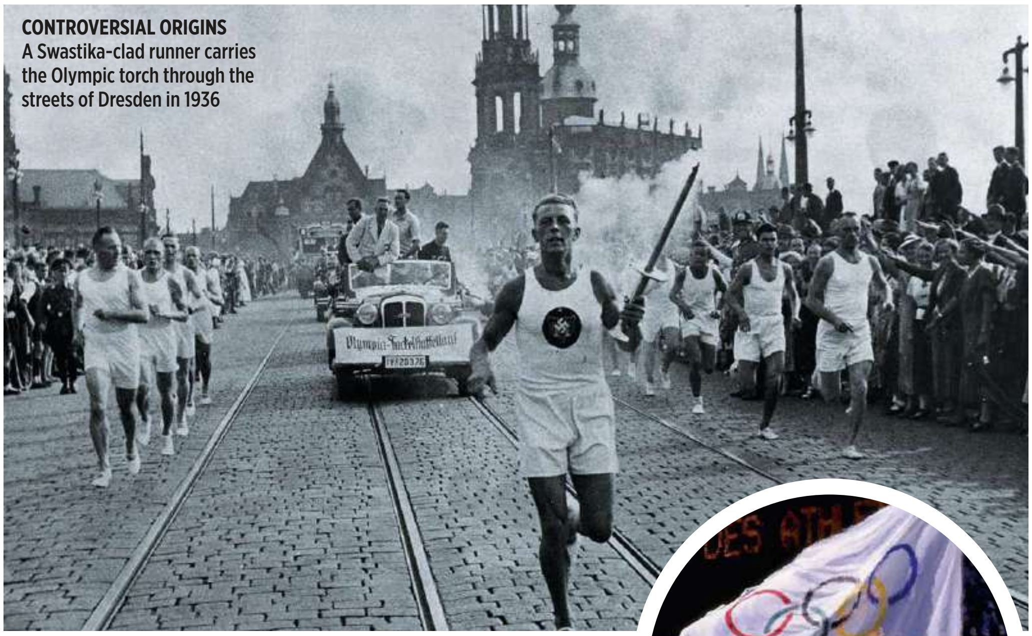
SHORT ANSWER The Nile gave the Ancient Egyptian civilisation life, and the plant that allowed them to write all about it

LONG ANSWER Thanks to the reed-like plant *Cyperus papyrus* growing in the Nile Delta, writing something down in Ancient Egypt became much easier than carving hieroglyphics into tough stone walls. It could also be used to create a whole load of other things, like rope, baskets, sandals and boats.

To make paper, the fibrous insides of the plant's triangular stalks would be sliced into thin strips, soaked in water and laid in crisscrossing layers horizontally and vertically. It then had to be pounded, pressed and left out in the Sun to dry, allowing the plant's sap to glue the strips together into a single sheet, and voila... papyrus!

Cheap, hardy in hot climates, and able to be made in vast quantities – the plant was abundant on the banks of the Nile and grew to around five metres high – papyrus made for a popular paper not only in Egypt, but around the Mediterranean for several millennia.

GETTY IMAGES X5, ALAMY X2



CONTROVERSIAL ORIGINS A Swastika-clad runner carries the Olympic torch through the streets of Dresden in 1936

When was the first Olympic torch relay?

SHORT ANSWER Don't look to the Ancient Greeks; it was the Nazis who got the relay up and running

LONG ANSWER The tradition of running the Olympic flame in relay did not feature in the ancient games, nor did it appear when the starter's pistol sounded for the modern Olympics in 1896. In fact, the torch relay owes its existence to Nazi Germany.

The sports administrator Carl Diem came up with the idea for the 1936 games in Berlin – the one Adolf Hitler intended as a demonstration of the superiority of Aryans and the Third Reich. Diem, who had been chosen as organiser before the rise of the Nazis, wanted the relay to be a spiritual connection to the Olympics' ancient forebears, who kept a sacred fire burning throughout the duration of their games.

On 20 July 1936, the flame was lit in Olympia and a Greek athlete, Konstantin Kondylis, began the relay to Berlin, a journey of more than 3,000 miles more than 3,000 runners, and lasting 12 days. It proved a massive success for Nazi Germany, although in the resulting propaganda film the lighting of the flame was carefully reshot to ensure that a German, Aryan runner came first.

The relay, rather than being condemned as a corrupting Nazi practice, was instantly reclaimed for the 1948 Olympics in London as a "relay of peace".

Did men really drink out of moustache cups?

SHORT ANSWER Well, how else were they to protect their face fuzz from hot beverages?

LONG ANSWER There was a demand in the Victorian age, when moustaches were the must-have upper lip accessory, for a way men could enjoy their tea without upsetting their prim and proper facial hair.

The British potter Harvey Adams came up with the solution. In the 1860s, he developed a cup with a shelf on one side, on which the drinker could rest their tache without fear of a dunking or melting the wax that held it in shape. The guard had a hole to allow small sips.

Moustachioed men of Europe, and later the US, rejoiced as other potters soon copied Adams' design.

Full Beard and Moustache

HIRSUTES YOU, SIR Harvey Adams' design has worked wonders for hairy tea drinkers

What happened to the SS *Ourang Medan*?

SHORT ANSWER Hold on… was there even a ship at all?

LONG ANSWER As the Dutch ship SS *Ourang Medan* passed through the Strait of Malacca in the 1940s, its radio operator sent out a chilling SOS. "All officers including captain dead, lying in chartroom and on bridge, probably whole crew dead," the message went, before he jabbed incoherent Morse code and finished with, "I die".

A rescue team found bodies strewn everywhere with no obvious injuries. But before an investigation could take place, the vessel exploded. What fate befell the crew and caused the blast? Or is the whole thing made up?

The SS *Ourang Medan* didn't appear in the shipping register, Lloyd's List; the rescue ship records do not relate these events; and the accounts that do exist differ. This hasn't put off conspiracy theorists, however, who see the lack of information as clues towards a cover-up, alleging that the ship was carrying highly sensitive cargo.

GHOST SHIP Some historians claim that the *Ourang Medan* story is a work of fiction

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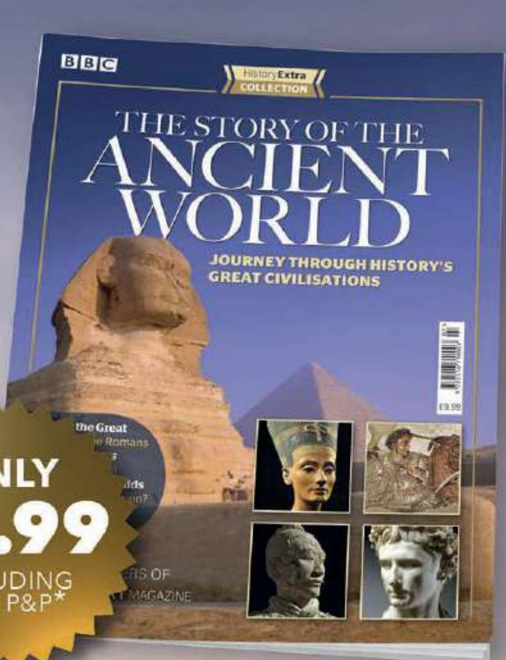
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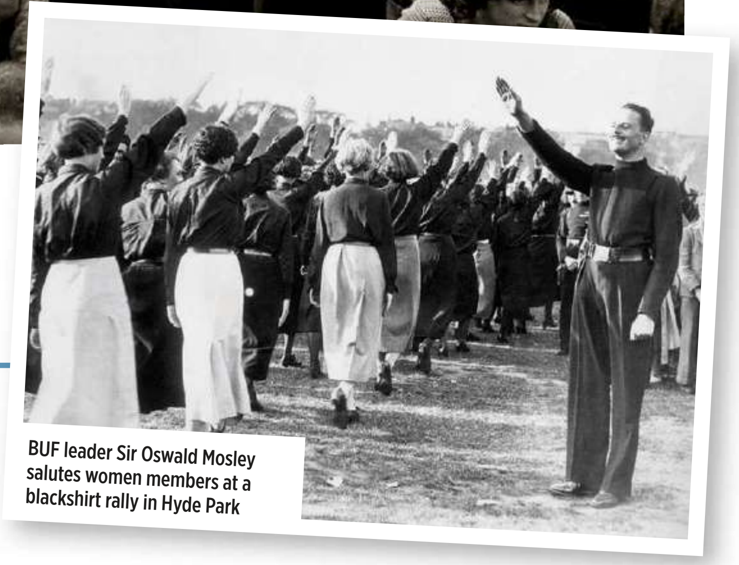
ONE TO WATCH

National Front members clash with police and counter-protesters in Lewisham, 1977. A new series lifts the lid on fascism's history in Britain



BUF leader Sir Oswald Mosley salutes women members at a blackshirt rally in Hyde Park

Warnings from the past

Britain's Fascist Thread / BBC Radio 4, scheduled for Friday 19 February

According to powerful British national myths bound up with World War II, fascism is something that happened in other people's countries. The truth, as a new three-part series presented by historian Camilla Scholfield makes clear, is that fascism has its own distinct history in Britain, which began in earnest in 1923 when Rotha Lintorn-Orman, inspired by Mussolini, founded the British Fascisti.

Fascism had enough adherents by 1934 for Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists (BUF) to be able to hold a rally at London's Olympia Exhibition Centre. The level of violence at the event, when stewards of the BUF's paramilitary wing, the Fascist Defence Force, clashed with anti-fascist protesters, shocked the country. The *Daily Mail*, whose proprietor Viscount Rothermere had written effusively of the Blackshirts, withdrew support.

It's an event Scholfield uses as a starting point for an exploration of British fascism in the interwar period. The second show takes a similar approach to the years after World War II by focusing on 1977, when the National Front attempted to march from New Cross to Catford, supposedly in response to a spate of muggings by black youths. As protesters staged counter-demonstrations, a clash that came to be known as the 'Battle of Lewisham' resulted in more than 250 injuries and 111 arrests.

The final programme deals with the 21st century, where fascism sustains itself not through set-piece events, but online via atomised networks.

Throughout, Schofield grapples with the question of how we define fascism, a kind of anti-political grab-bag of notions. It's a question that seems especially vital when you consider how recurring themes in fascist rhetoric – ultra-nationhood, hostility to immigration, the idea of homegrown culture under siege – lie close to the centre of contemporary politics.

Interviewees include historians such as Martin Pugh and Julie Gottlieb, plus journalist Francis Beckett, who wrote about his father, John (a leading member of the BUF), in a book named *Fascist in the Family*.

GETTY IMAGES X1, ALAMY X1

An episode of the BBC Two series explores the excavation of the Oseberg Viking ship in Norway, along with recent efforts to understand how it was built

Buried treasures and big characters

Raiders of the Lost Past with Dr Janina Ramirez / BBC Two, scheduled for Friday 19 February

In 1900, the British archaeologist Sir Arthur Evans (1851–1941) began work at the Bronze Age site of Knossos, Crete. His excavations on the Greek island radically changed our understanding of early European civilisation. It was Evans who popularised the terms 'Minoan' – a reference to the mythical King Minos of Minotaur and labyrinth fame.

As Dr Janina Ramirez explores in the second series of *Raiders of the Lost Past*, which looks at the work of explorer-archaeologists in the 20th century and these men's enduring influence, Evans is both an admirable and problematic figure. Some of his ideas about the past were, to put it politely, romantic, yet they still play into the present.

For the second show, Ramirez heads north to see the Oseberg Viking ship. Now displayed at the Viking Ship Museum in Norway, this near-miraculously preserved 'Karve', a broad-hulled longship that dates from the first half of the ninth century, was discovered in a large burial mound. The ship was excavated by Norwegian archaeologist Haakon Shetelig (1877–1955) and his Swedish colleague Gabriel Gustafson (1853–1915).

Finally, Ramirez visits the Konya Plain in Turkey's Central Anatolia region. It was here, in 1958, that British archaeologist James Mellaart (1925–2012) uncovered the Neolithic proto-city of Çatalhöyük, where evidence shows our ancestors were trying out urban life as early as 7000 BC. Mellaart himself is almost as fascinating as the site he uncovered, a man who was at the centre of controversy more than once during a colourful career.

Cultural historian and broadcaster Dr Janina Ramirez comes up with the goods in the second series of *Raiders of the Lost Past*

An aerial shot of Fort St Elmo in Valletta's Grand Harbour, Malta, along with a drone camera (*inset*) used for capturing such images in the series

ME HOME CHA RMAN FRED

Double dealing

Judas and the Black Messiah / On streaming services from Friday 26 February

As the chairman of the Illinois chapter of the Black Panther Party, Fred Hampton was a figure that the FBI regarded as a dangerous radical. So, in late 1968, the authorities recruited thief William O'Neal to infiltrate the Panthers in Chicago and act as an informant.

It's a story both of betrayal and institutionally sanctioned violence that's retold in a new drama from director Shaka King. Anchoring the film, Daniel Kaluuya (*Get Out*) plays Hampton as a man who was both principled and charismatic. In contrast, O'Neal, played by Lakeith Stanfield (*Selma*) is depicted as someone at war with himself, despite initially getting an adrenaline hit from his double life.

Elsewhere in the film, Martin Sheen (*The West Wing*) gives a memorable cameo as FBI chief J Edgar Hoover.

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Bringing history alive

You're Dead To Me / BBC Sounds, available to download now

How do you bring the past alive both to those already interested in history *and* to those who find the subject difficult or impenetrable? The answer, according to *You're Dead To Me*, hosted by Greg Jenner, also the historical consultant on *Horrible Histories*, is to pair a comedian with an academic.

It's a more subtle approach than it might at first appear because the aim is for the comedian to ask the kind of questions that any of us might when offered the opportunity to quiz an expert – but with the added advantage that comedians are used to pulling subjects and situations apart as they reach for gags, and so often throw curveballs to the historians and make the experts look anew at their own specialisms.

There are 15 new episodes in the third series and the subjects are typically eclectic, ranging from the 16th-century Irish pirate queen Gráinne O'Malley to King James VI of Scotland and I of England, the Borgias to the 17th-century Ashanti Ghanaian empire. Later in the series, five episodes will focus on different aspects of US history.

Comedians lending their wit to proceedings this time around include Kae Kurd, Phil Wang and Catherine Bohart, while the wisdom (and further wit too) arrives via the likes of Oxford's Dr Moudhy Al-Rashid, an expert in the Babylonian civilisation of ancient Mesopotamia.

For those harried and harassed carers to the young needing help during Covid lockdowns, Jenner also hosts a new series of *Homeschool History* (BBC Radio 4 and BBC Sounds), where the subjects include the Great Fire of London, life in Roman Pompeii, William Shakespeare and Mary Seacole.

Irish pirate queen Gráinne O'Malley – who featured in the February 2021 issue of *BBC History Revealed* – and James VI and I are two of the figures documented in the third outing of Greg Jenner's podcast series

Bird's eye view

World War Two from Above / Yesterday, scheduled for Monday 8 February and available to stream via UKTV Play

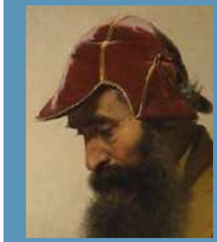
As time passes, the archaeological evidence for events during 1939–45 inevitably begins to pass from view. Walls crumble, metal corrodes and nature reclaims sites that aren't maintained. Nevertheless, for battlefield historians, enough remains to help them look anew at some of the major events of World War II. Especially when – as in this new six-part series – experts use cutting-edge drone technology and 3D modelling to survey historically significant locales.

Stories covered include the battle of the Bulge (1944–45), when the Germans launched a counterattack in the densely forested Ardennes region of Belgium. In particular, the experts focus on the role of African-American troops during the battle.

Another programme takes in the notoriously bloody battle of Monte Cassio in the first half of 1944, when the Allies attempted to break the Axis powers' Winter Line, which was intended to prevent the route to Rome from falling. Further episodes explore other locations key to the Nazi war effort, plus a Maltese submarine wreck and a secret research base in Scotland.

A contradictory figure

The Essay: Blood and Bronze/ BBC Radio 3, scheduled for Monday 22 March



As violent as he was prodigiously gifted, the 16th-century Italian polymath Benvenuto Cellini (*pictured*) lived an extraordinary life. Born in Florence, he was apprenticed to a goldsmith, yet he was also at different points in his career a soldier, artist, writer and musician.

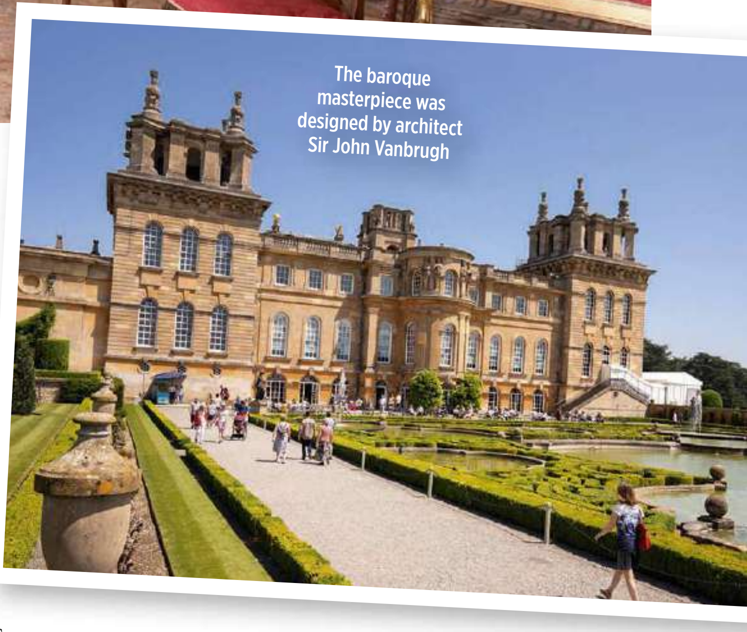
It's a story explored by historian Jerry Brotton over 10 weekday episodes that seek to understand how a man capable of creating extraordinary works of beauty and was admired by his contemporary, Michelangelo, was also a killer.

VIRTUAL TOURS & TALKS

We've rounded up five virtual tours and talks that allow you to discover history at your leisure – and without leaving your home

SCAN THE QR CODE ON YOUR SMART DEVICE

Blenheim's Red Drawing Room was used for entertaining guests



The baroque masterpiece was designed by architect Sir John Vanbrugh

SCAN ME

Blenheim Palace Virtual Tour

ONLINE INDEFINITELY

bit.ly/blenheimpalaceonline

One of England's largest country houses, Blenheim Palace was built in the early 18th century as a gift from Queen Anne to John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough.

During the War of the Spanish Succession, which raged from 1704–14, Churchill had led the Allied forces to victory during the battle of Blenheim, giving the Oxfordshire retreat its name. However, it is also likely that Anne's decision to impart such a generous gift was motivated by the duke's marriage to Sarah Jennings – one of her 'favourites'.

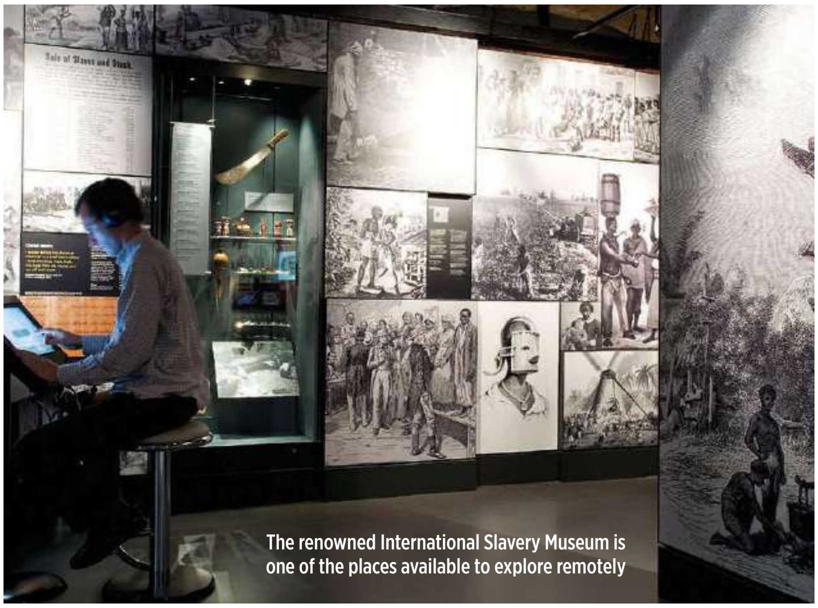
Having remained closed for large parts of the Covid-19 pandemic, Blenheim Palace is now offering visitors the chance to examine its stunning baroque architecture, lavish interiors and expansive gardens courtesy of a virtual tour.

Among the highlights available through your web browser is the palace's Great Hall, which boasts a decorated ceiling painted by Sir James Thornhill, as well the Long Library, which contains more than 10,000 books.

There's also the chance to examine some more recent history, too, with parts of the palace's heritage linked to Winston Churchill – grandson of the 6th Duke of Marlborough – who was born at Blenheim and spent much of his childhood there. The grounds themselves would play a vital role during the war effort, with the ornamental lake being used to plan the D-Day landings of 6 June 1944.

The virtual tour experience is free and is complemented by a separate 'audio guide', imparting further information about the palace's rooms and notable residents.

ALAMY X4, GETTY IMAGES X2



The renowned International Slavery Museum is one of the places available to explore remotely

SCAN ME

National Museums Liverpool Virtual Tours

ONLINE INDEFINITELY

bit.ly/liverpoolmuseumsonline

Ever fancied having a museum to yourself? Thanks to National Museums Liverpool, that's now a semi-reality following the creation of several new virtual tours, allowing you to 'stroll' through a number of its sites from the comfort of your home, including selected areas of the International Slavery Museum, the World Museum, the Walker Art Gallery and the Museum of Liverpool.

From dinosaur skeletons to displays charting the history of Merseyside's transport network, there's certainly plenty of topics to explore. And, if you have access to the technology, the tours are compatible with virtual reality headsets, giving you a truly immersive experience.

Dead Famous: An Unexpected History of Celebrity with Greg Jenner

19 MARCH

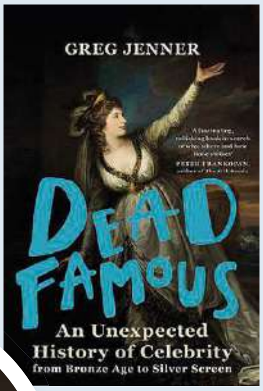
bit.ly/deadfamoustalk

SCAN ME

From the scandals of Lord Byron to the coffin-sleeping exploits of actress Sarah Bernhardt, people have been fascinated by the private lives of celebrities for centuries.

To coincide with the paperback release of his 2020 book, *Dead Famous: An Unexpected History of Celebrity from Bronze Age to Silver Screen*, historian Greg Jenner (*pictured*) will give a web talk exploring the roots of our obsession, drawing on a cast of some 125 colourful characters.

The event, hosted by the National Archives, is free to attend – register online and follow the instructions to join the talk on Microsoft Teams.


GREG JENNER
DEAD FAMOUS
An Unexpected History of Celebrity
from Bronze Age to Silver Screen

Greg Jenner is also the host of *You're Dead to Me* (see page 81)

Pandora's Jar with Natalie Haynes

SCAN ME

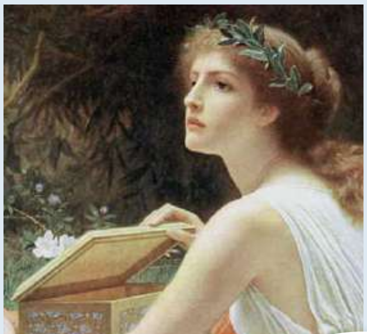
22 MARCH

bit.ly/pandorasjar

In this talk hosted by the British Museum, classicist Natalie Haynes will discuss her new book, *Pandora's Jar*, which re-examines ancient Greek mythology from the perspectives of women.

From Helen of Troy to Medusa, Haynes will look at how female figures have been portrayed negatively in contrast to their male counterparts, while also shining a spotlight on women whose stories have been overlooked.

The event is free to attend, and only requires the use of the video conferencing system Zoom to access – just visit the link above.



Natalie Haynes (*right*) looks at how Greek myths have portrayed women such as Pandora (*above*)

Endell Street: The Women Who Ran Britain's Trailblazing Military Hospital

SCAN ME

18 MARCH

bit.ly/endellstreet

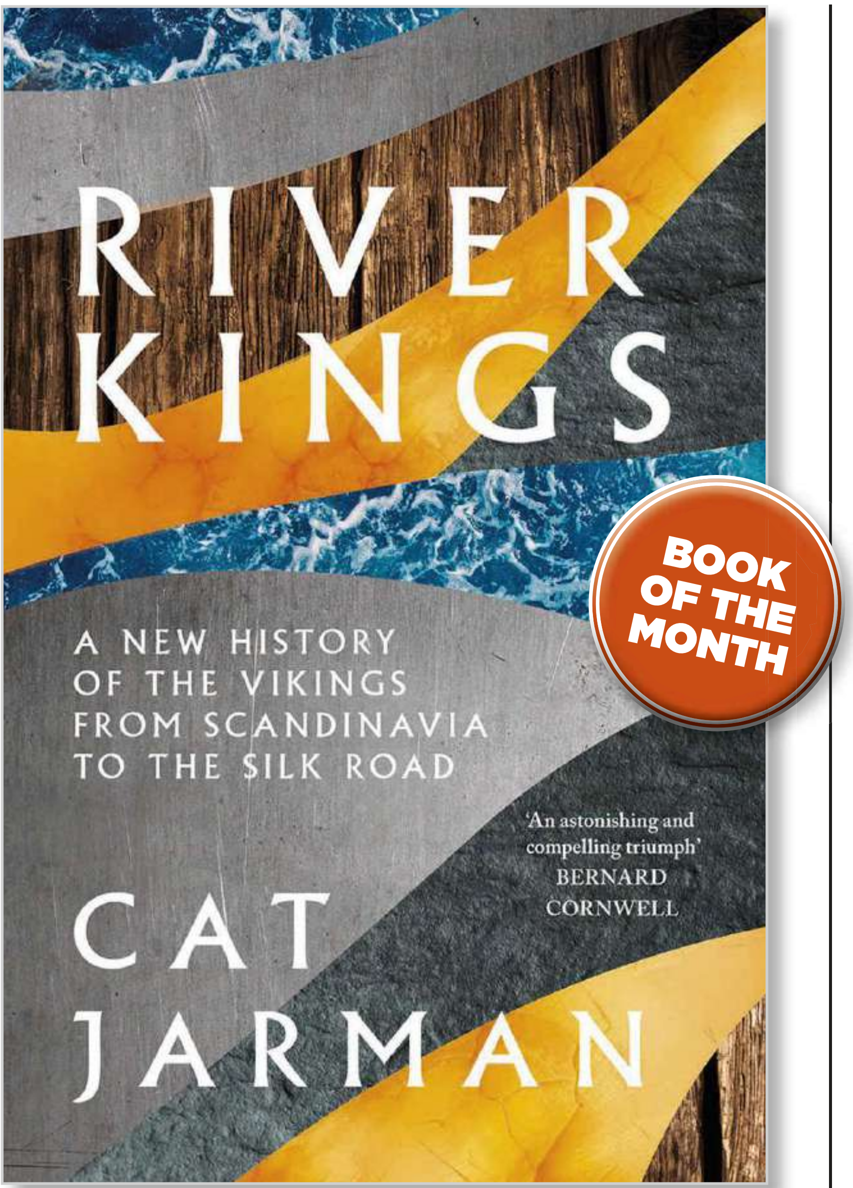
In 1914, British women rushed to offer their services for the war effort, only to be turned away. However, doctors Flora Murray and Louisa Garrett Anderson defied this order, and – along with other likeminded medical professionals – set up a military hospital in Paris. It proved so successful they were soon asked to create a facility on London's Endell Street.

Author Wendy Moore will uncover the story in a talk hosted by Royal College of Physicians, followed by a Q&A. Tickets can be purchased at the link above.

Volunteers from Endell Street hospital shown buying war bonds

BOOKS & PODCASTS

THIS MONTH'S BEST HISTORICAL READS AND LISTENS


RIVER KINGS
A NEW HISTORY OF THE VIKINGS FROM SCANDINAVIA TO THE SILK ROAD
'An astonishing and compelling triumph' BERNARD CORNWELL
CAT JARMAN
BOOK OF THE MONTH

River Kings: A New History of Vikings from Scandinavia to the Silk Road

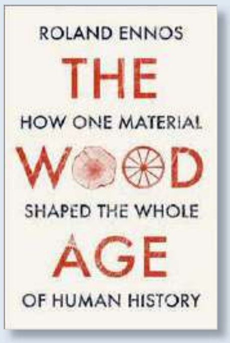
By Cat Jarman
William Collins, £25, hardback, 336 pages

Cat Jarman's book draws on the latest scientific techniques to shed new light on the perennially fascinating Viking world. Jarman is knowledgable and engaging company, revealing how her work as a bioarchaeologist can offer fresh insights into how people in Scandinavia lived and died between the eighth and 11th centuries. From the extent of their global impact to the roles of women and children, this is as much a detective story as it is a traditional historical narrative.

The Wood Age: How One Material Shaped the Whole of Human History

By Roland Ennos
William Collins, £20, hardback, 336 pages

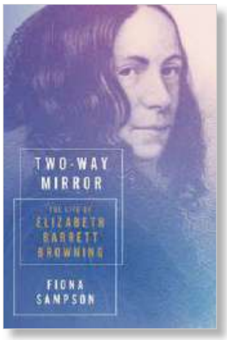
In this age of plastic, silicon and steel, it can be easy to overlook how central wood has been to centuries of human development. This vibrant account sets the record straight, chronicling how our forebears relied on trees for everything from buildings and weapons to tools and musical instruments. It takes plenty of pleasing detours, too: while you may have heard of the Boston Tea Party, but the Pine Tree Riot of 1772 deserves to be better known.

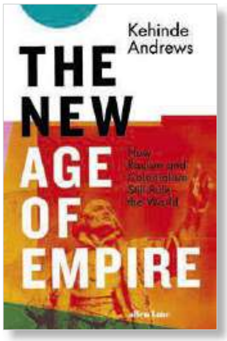

ROLAND ENNOS
THE WOOD AGE
HOW ONE MATERIAL SHAPED THE WHOLE OF HUMAN HISTORY

Two-Way Mirror: The Life of Elizabeth Barrett Browning

By Fiona Sampson
WW Norton & Company, £20, hardback, 320 pages

Critically renowned and internationally successful, Victorian poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning lived a life of creative inspiration and romantic passion (she is perhaps as famous for her relationship with writer Robert Browning as she is her literary output). This major new biography aims to piece together a fuller picture of Elizabeth, exploring her long battles with illness and way in which she willed her identity as a writer into being. Drawing on new research, this is an engaging profile of a fascinating figure.


TWO-WAY MIRROR
THE LIFE OF ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING
FIONA SAMPSON



The New Age of Empire: How Racism and Colonialism Still Rule the World

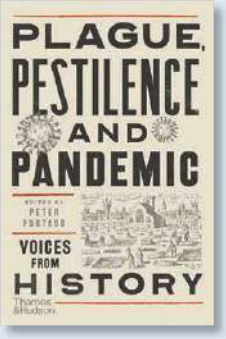
By Kehinde Andrews
Allen Lane, £20, hardback, 288 pages

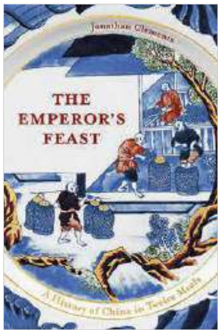
This timely, trenchant book argues that 21st-century societies are still overwhelmingly moulded by the legacy of colonialism. It neatly intertwines history and current affairs, tracing the roots of recent events – the coronavirus pandemic, the felling of Bristol's statue of slave trader Edward Colston, the killing of George Floyd by US police in May 2020 – back to the inequalities of the past. In so doing, Andrews sets out to illustrate "just how fundamental the racist logic of empire remains in shaping the world".

Plague, Pestilence and Pandemic: Voices from History

Edited by Peter Furtado
Thames and Hudson, £20, hardback, 336 pages

As well as its devastating death toll, the ongoing coronavirus pandemic has disrupted societies around the world, separated families and friends, and altered established patterns of living. It all feels very unfamiliar – but, of course, people in other places and other times lived through similar outbreaks of disease. This collection of eyewitness accounts and survivor testimonies explores their stories from across the continents and centuries, offering insightful, moving and empathetic parallels with our current moment.





The Emperor's Feast: A History of China in Twelve Meals

By Jonathan Clements
Hodder & Stoughton, £25, hardback, 320 pages

Bird's News Soup, grape wine, flavoured teas: this tasting menu of Chinese history charts the nation's past through its culinary innovations. It's rich, detailed stuff, fusing tales of eating and cooking with an extensively researched overview of thousands of years of culture and politics. Across that vast sweep of time, several recurring themes emerge: the rise of regional delicacies, the ongoing interchange between different cultures, and the central role of food in human societies.

HistoryExtra Podcast

Each month we bring you three of our favourite interviews from the HistoryExtra podcast archives...

Visit historyextra.com/podcast for new podcasts every week

THIS MONTH... three podcasts on East Asian history

HistoryExtra Podcast

The history of Japan: everything you wanted to know

http://bit.ly/JapanPod92

In this whistle-stop tour of Japan, recorded in 2020, historian and broadcaster Christopher Harding explores how Japan was forged, the feudal era of shogun and samurai, and the 20th-century conflicts that were to change it forever.

Historyextra podcast

China in World War Two

http://bit.ly/ChinaPod92

China is another East Asian nation which was irrevocably shaped by the its experience of 20th-century warfare. This 2017 conversation sees expert historians Hans van de Ven and Rana Mitter discuss the ways in which civil war, World War II and China's conflict with Korea had a lasting impact on politics, economy, society and the lives of people throughout the nation.

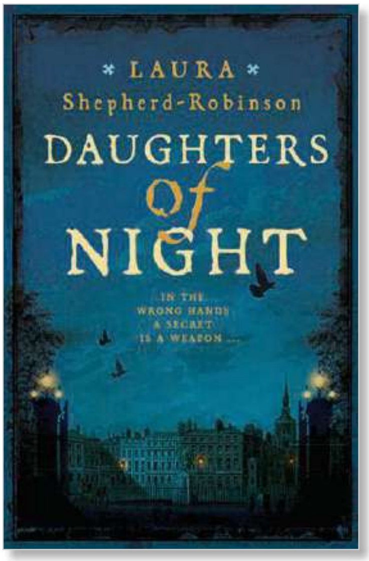
Historyextra podcast

The Terracotta Warriors

http://bit.ly/TerracottaPod92

They're one of the most enduring symbols of Chinese history: the thousands of terracotta sculptures dating from the third century BC and resembling a vast army designed to protect the first emperor of China in the afterlife. In this 2018 interview, Edward Burman delves into their creation, what they symbolise, and the reasons they still continue to fascinate us centuries later.

HISTORICAL FICTION...



Daughters of the Night

By Laura Shepherd-Robinson
Pan Macmillan, £14.99

In London, 1782, Caroline 'Caro' Corsham is anxiously awaiting her husband's return from France when she stumbles across the body of a well-dressed woman in Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens. Once the police discover that the victim was a prostitute, they become disinterested in finding the culprit. With motives of her own in seeking justice, Caro enlists the help of a thieftaker, Peregrine Child, and together they explore the treacherous world of Georgian London.

•••• Excerpt ••••

In this extract, which opens the novel, Caro finds a well-dressed woman mortally wounded in the bowers of the Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens...

In the wrong hands a secret is a weapon.

Caroline Corsham was alive to the danger, to the vulnerability of her position – she had thought of little else since last night's disaster. Yet now that the truth was known – her secret guessed, the blade honed sharp – what choice did she have left, except to believe? A last roll of the dice. Nothing ventured, nothing gained. These banalities spurred her on. God grant me courage.

Taking a ginger comfit from her enamelled pillbox, Caro slipped it into her mouth, her nausea rising. Muslin, lace and brocade hemmed her in on every side; jewelled buttons flashing on embroidered waistcoats; pastel shades of periwig and kid glove; silver buckles glinting in the light of a thousand beeswax candles that filled the domed roof of the Rotunda with their honeyed scent. It was the opening night of Jacobus Agnetti's exhibition of classical scenes, and half of London society had turned out for the wretched man. Distractedly, she greeted people she knew: allies of her husband in the House of Commons; clients of the Craven Bank; rival beauties, solicitous matrons, admiring gentlemen. Their laughter was shrill, pink faces merged in a smear of complacency. They smile to bare their teeth, before they rip you apart.

Q&A

Laura Shepherd-Robinson

Laura worked in politics for nearly 20 years before completing an MA in Creative Writing. Her first book, *Blood & Sugar*, was chosen as a novel of the year by both the *Guardian* and the *Telegraph*, and also won the Historical Writers' Association Debut Crown in 2019.

Why did you decide to become a novelist after spending two decades in the world of politics?
I always knew I didn't want to be in politics forever, and I'd toyed for about 10 years with the idea of writing a novel. Eventually, my boss retired and it felt like a natural time to make a break. I thought "if not now, then when?" So I applied to do an MA in Creative Writing at City University. It was on that course that I wrote the first draft of my debut novel, *Blood & Sugar*.

How do you research and write your stories?
I tend to plot and research at the same time and the process becomes very symbiotic. People talk about research as being an enormous drag, but I find it inspiring. I get so many ideas for character and sub-plot and they always feel so vivid, because the historical details are more interesting and surprising than anything I could invent.

Daughters of Night proved tricky to write because there were a lot of different elements to the book, and crafting them into a coherent narrative that wouldn't overwhelm my reader was essential.

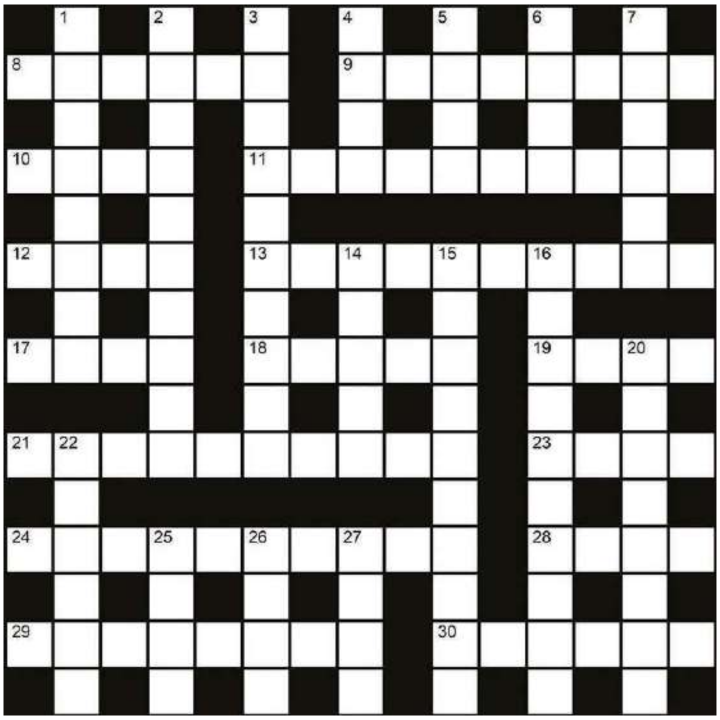
I also wanted the reader to get to know the murder victims in the novel as people with agency and desires, not as faceless prostitutes. The solution was a second timeline, telling the backstory from the point of view of one of the victims.

Your previous novel, *Blood & Sugar*, was also set in 18th-century London. What is it that draws you to this time in history?
It's a period that has always fascinated me, as it feels like the cusp between two eras. On the one hand you have the ideas of the Enlightenment and a flowering of the political and economic philosophy that underpins most democracies today. And on the other hand, you have the brutality of the slave trade, blood sports, rampant sexual exploitation, horrific corporal and capital punishments, vicious poverty and depredation. To me, it is the perfect era for writing crime.

Is there a completely different historical period you'd like to set a novel in?
I have plans to write a contemporary novel, but with a strong historical slant and setting. I'd also love to write a novel set in the 1920s one day. Again, it was a period of transition: politics, sex, social change, spies and war on the horizon. Now that's going to give me some food for thought!

CROSSWORD No. 92

Test your history knowledge to solve our prize puzzle – and you could win a fantastic new book



Set by Richard Smyth

ACROSS

8 General Sir Charles James ___ (1782–1853), Commander-in-Chief of India from 1848 to 1849 (6)

9 Hero of a 1749 novel by Henry Fielding (3,5)

10 Avant-garde art movement of the early 20th century (4)

11 Bill Rodgers, Shirley Williams, Roy Jenkins and David Owen (4,2,4)

12 New York City art museum, founded in 1929 (4)

13 Adopted name of film actor Bernard Schwartz (1925–2010) (4,6)

17 1880 novel by Émile Zola (4)

18 Medieval Scottish noble title (5)

19 US state, admitted to the Union in 1896 (4)

21 1956 Lerner and Loewe musical based on *Pygmalion* (2,4,4)

23 Traditional Arab or Indian sailing vessel (4)

24 Plague that arrived in England in 1348 (5,5)

28 Swedish pop group founded in 1973 (4)

29 Wernher ___ (1912–77), German-born pioneer of rocket technology (3,5)

30 1891 play by Oscar Wilde (6)

DOWN

1 Giacomo ___ (1725–98), Italian adventurer, known for his love affairs (8)

2 1952 biopic starring Marlon Brando (4,6)

3 Love sonnet by John Keats, written in 1818 or 1819 (6,4)

4 Jazzman Getz or comics legend Lee, perhaps (4)

5 1847 novel by Herman Melville (4)

6 ___ *Hall*, 2009 historical novel by Hilary Mantel (4)

7 Joe ___ (1903–78), US jazz violinist (6)

14 ___land, former British protectorate in south-east Africa (5)

15 Old English hunting ballad (5,5)

16 Furniture item at Camelot (or the Algonquin hotel) (5,5)

20 Weapon developed by the Manhattan Project (4-4)

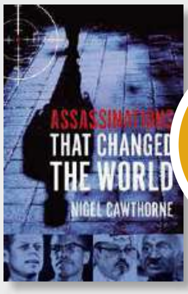
22 ___ *Submarine*, 1968 Beatles film (6)

25 Island nation ruled by Fidel Castro from 1959 to 2008 (4)

26 Historic Kent town (4)

27 ___ *Karenina*, Leo Tolstoy novel of 1878 (4)

CHANCE TO WIN



BOOK WORTH £8.99 FOR THREE WINNERS

Assassinations that Changed the World
Nigel Cawthorne

HOW TO ENTER

Post entries to **BBC History Revealed, March 2021 Crossword, PO Box 501, Leicester, LE94 0AA** or email them to **march2021@historyrevealedcomps.co.uk** by noon on **1 April 2021**.

By entering, participants agree to be bound by the terms and conditions shown in the box below. Immediate Media Co Ltd, publishers of *BBC History Revealed*, would love to keep you informed by post or telephone of special offers and promotions from the Immediate Media Co Group. Please write 'Do Not Contact IMC' if you prefer not to receive such information by post or phone. If you would like to receive this information by email, please write your email address on the entry. You may unsubscribe from receiving these messages at any time. For more about the Immediate Privacy Policy, see the box below.
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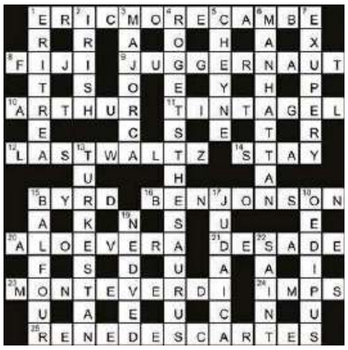
SOLUTION Nº 90



CROSSWORD COMPETITION TERMS & CONDITIONS

The competition is open to all UK residents (inc. Channel Islands), aged 18 or over, except Immediate Media Co Bristol Ltd employees or contractors, and anyone connected with the competition or their direct family members. By entering, participants agree to be bound by these terms and conditions and that their name and county may be released if they win. Only one entry per person. The closing date and time is as shown under **How to Enter**, above. Entries received after that will not be considered. Entries cannot be returned. Entrants must supply full name, address and daytime phone number. Immediate Media Company (publishers of ***BBC History Revealed***) will only ever use personal details for the purposes of administering this competition, and will not publish them or provide them to anyone without permission. Read more about the Immediate Privacy Policy at www.immediatemedia.co.uk/privacy-policy. The winning entrants will be the first correct entries drawn at random after the closing time. The prize and number of winners will be as shown on the Crossword page. There is no cash alternative and the prize will not be transferable. Immediate Media Company Bristol Limited's decision is final and no correspondence relating to the competition will be entered into. The winners will be notified by post within 28 days of the close of the competition. The name and county of residence of the winners will be published in the magazine within two months of the closing date. If the winner is unable to be contacted within one month of the closing date, Immediate Media Company Bristol Limited reserves the right to offer the prize to a runner-up.
Immediate Media Company Bristol Limited reserves the right to amend these terms and conditions or to cancel, alter or amend the promotion at any stage, if deemed necessary in its opinion, or if circumstances arise outside of its control. The promotion is subject to the laws of England. Promoter: Immediate Media Company Bristol Limited

LETTERS

IN A NUTSHELL

YOUR BRIEF EXPLAINER TO HISTORY'S HOT TOPICS

"Prisoners took part in 'dirty protests', where they refused to wash and smeared their cells with excrement"

WHAT IF… JULIUS CAESAR HAD NOT BEEN ASSASSINATED?

Jonny Wilkes talks to **Professor Barry Strauss** about how Caesar could have survived the Ides of March and why it may not have affected the move from republic to empire anyway

IN CONTEXT

"CAESAR'S ATTENTION WOULD QUICKLY HAVE TURNED TO HIS PLANNED MILITARY CAMPAIGN AGAINST DACIA AND PARTHIA"

THE PIRATE QUEEN OF IRELAND

Biographer **Anne Chambers** helps **Emma Slattery Williams** uncover the true story of Ireland's remarkable pirate queen, Grace O'Malley

Our February 2021 issue prompted several readers to write in, with Chris Pook inspired to suggest a topic for our 'What If…' series (*top*)

STARTING YOUNG

My name is Rae. I like history because I like learning about the past. My favourite eras are the Tudors, Celts, Romans, Vikings and the Victorians. I like reading about the different eras. I like the *Horrible Histories* books. I like your magazine because there are lots of different things I can find out more about.

Rae Creedon, Yorkshire, age 8

Editor says:

Thank you so much for your lovely letter, Rae. It's great to know you're enjoying learning about history so much. Who knows – you could end up in the editor's seat one day!

BITESIZE HISTORY

Just a short message to say how much I enjoy receiving your magazine each month. In these dark times, which ironically will become part of history itself in years to come, it is refreshing to receive a magazine that, issue after issue, does such a good job of entertaining its readers. I feel its greatest strength is the broad spectrum of topics covered – from the Romans to the Vikings, through to the Victorians.

The features really give you an insight into how ancient and more contemporary worlds were run, at a level that a layman like me can understand. It is very easy to find books that go into detail on these subjects, but it's nice to have bitesize editions that summarise the key concepts of what once was.

James Pearson, by email

REVISITING THE TROUBLES

I was interested to read your article on the IRA (In a Nutshell, February 2021) because the company I once worked for supplied quite a few machines to both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland when they were industrialising, offering big grants to companies opening factories there.

On one occasion, our sales engineer was on the shop floor in a factory in Newry, Northern Ireland, when he said to the manager: "Do you get much trouble with the IRA round here?" The manager replied "SHUT UP, SHUT UP! They are all around you!"

Later that same day, when checking into a local hotel, the hotel's boss insisted on putting the sales engineer's car into his own garage because of what might have happened to an English-registered vehicle during the night.

During one of my own trips to the Republic of Ireland, to a factory some 25 miles outside Dublin, there was a British tooling designer whose son worked on the shop floor. The son had been educated at an Irish school and told me that his school friends had once asked him to join 'The Boys' – they were trying to recruit him into the IRA.

My friend's son believed that they wanted him to join because nobody would have suspected an English boy to be a member.

John Grove, Derbyshire

ALTERNATIVE WORLDS

With reference to your fascinating 'What If…' series, may I suggest a future question for consideration: 'What if Mustafa Kemal Ataturk had been killed at Gallipoli? Would the Republic of Turkey have risen like a phoenix from the ashes of the Ottoman empire?'

Mustafa Kemal became a Turkish hero, achieving near-mythological status after leading his army to victory against an invading force of British and Anzac troops on the Gallipoli peninsula in 1915.

During a campaign lasting eight months, with appalling losses on both sides, Kemal often risked life and limb for his men. His bravery was such that on one occasion, when leading his soldiers into battle with enemy fire devastating the Turkish ranks, he was struck in the chest by shrapnel, only to be saved by his silver pocket watch.

This event was among the many that propelled him to celebrity status and would eventually allow him to take political power and create the Turkish Republic after the war had ended. A man ahead of his time, he made countless reforms in bringing Turkey, as a secular state, into the 20th century.

If he had died at Gallipoli, it is certain the Allies would have passed through the Dardanelles to the Black Sea, creating a supply link to an embattled Russia (the traditional enemy of the Turks), and taking Istanbul in the process. Consequently, there would have been no independent Turkish state.

Chris Pook, by email

MUSICAL INSPIRATION

Thank you for your article on Grace O'Malley in the February issue. I was intrigued to find out the full story of this remarkable woman, as my only previous knowledge of her exploits was through the soundtrack of a musical – one that I am listening to in my car!

The Pirate Queen is a lesser-known work by Alain Boublil and Claude-Michel Schoenberg (who wrote the blockbusters *Les Misérables* and *Miss Saigon*). It played in the US for a short period in 2006 and was not particularly successful.

Another one of Boublil and Schoenberg's works is *Martin Guerre*, which I went to see in the

GETTY IMAGES X1

West End, in 1996, and thoroughly enjoyed. I would be intrigued to know the true historical facts behind the story, which was also turned into a French film of 1982 (*The Return of Martin Guerre*), and similarly inspired the American film *Sommersby* 11 years later.

Maybe a future issue could include a piece on this man of mystery?
David Mortimer, by email

LESSONS LEARNED

As an American born in 1950, your recent story on wartime rationing (Christmas 2020) was just that to me: a story.

But several years ago, I joined my Sherlock Holmes fan group for dinner at a restaurant. As I was carving every possible scrap off the bone of a delicious lamb chop, the member across from me nudged my foot and murmured: "Pick it up and gnaw. If you grew up during World War II in Britain, you learned you never leave meat on the bone, no matter how unmannerly it looks!"
Kathleen Dawson, Ohio, US

CROSSWORD WINNERS

The three lucky winners of the crossword from issue 89 are:

LW Banks, Redcar
B Fellows, Coventry
J Sandford, Datchet

Congratulations! You've each won a copy of *Troy: Myth and Reality*.

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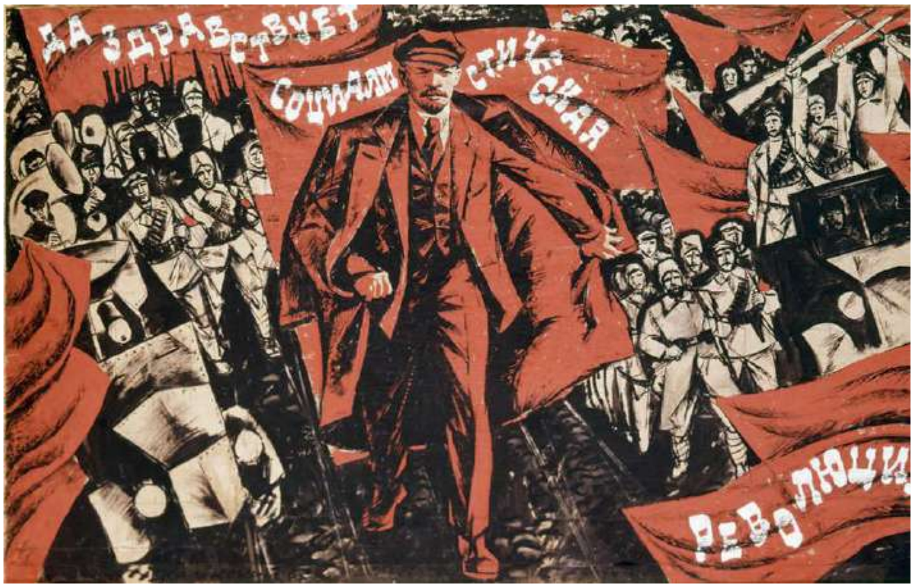

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BBC HISTORY REVEALED

ISSUE 92 – MARCH 2021
BBC History Revealed is published by Immediate Media Company Bristol Limited under licence from BBC Studios who help fund new BBC programmes

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Basic annual subscription rates
UK £64.87 **Eire/Europe** £67.99
ROW £69.00

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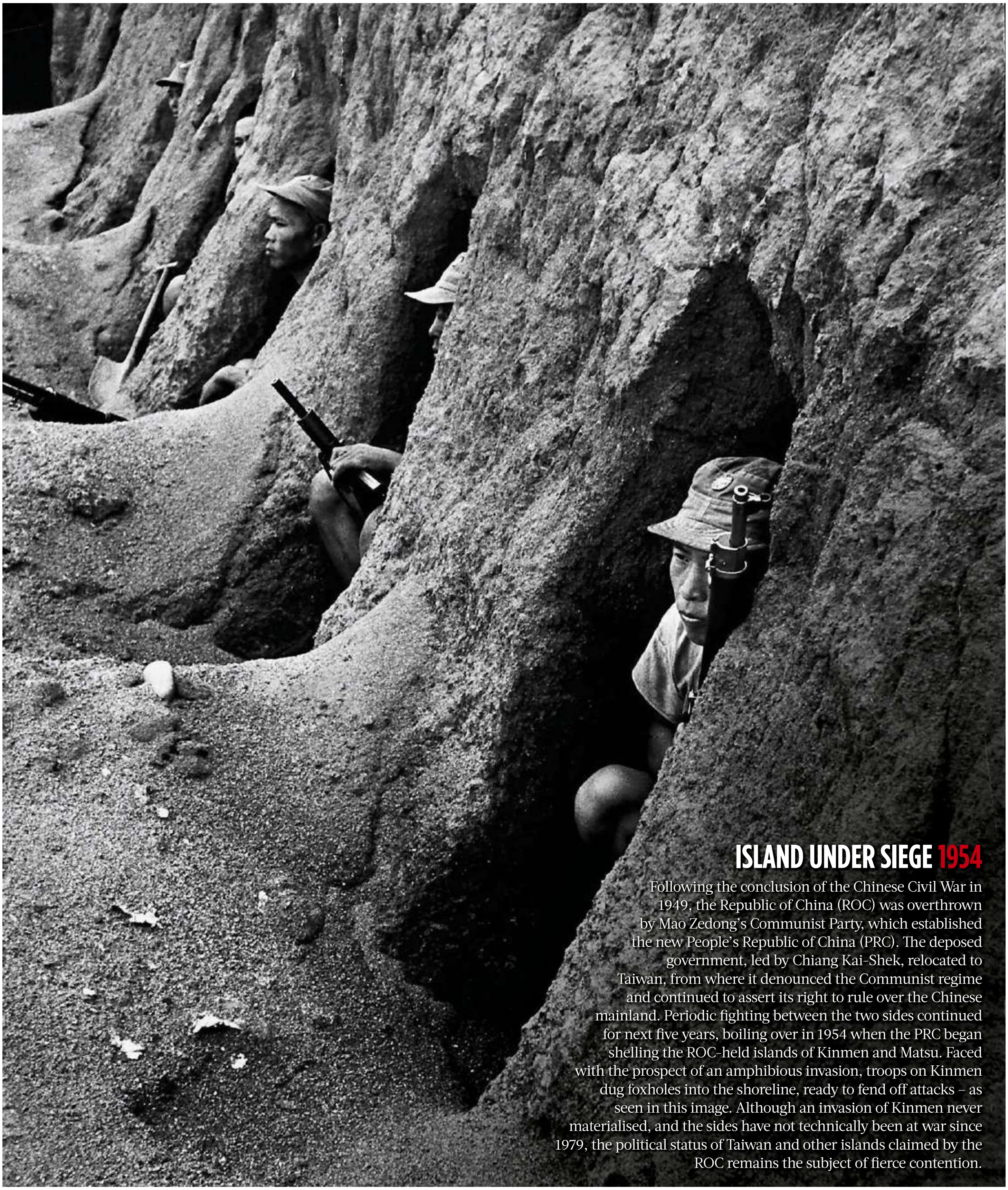

ISLAND UNDER SIEGE 1954

Following the conclusion of the Chinese Civil War in 1949, the Republic of China (ROC) was overthrown by Mao Zedong's Communist Party, which established the new People's Republic of China (PRC). The deposed government, led by Chiang Kai-Shek, relocated to Taiwan, from where it denounced the Communist regime and continued to assert its right to rule over the Chinese mainland. Periodic fighting between the two sides continued for next five years, boiling over in 1954 when the PRC began shelling the ROC-held islands of Kinmen and Matsu. Faced with the prospect of an amphibious invasion, troops on Kinmen dug foxholes into the shoreline, ready to fend off attacks – as seen in this image. Although an invasion of Kinmen never materialised, and the sides have not technically been at war since 1979, the political status of Taiwan and other islands claimed by the ROC remains the subject of fierce contention.

GETTY IMAGES

Thank you, Sylvia

Sylvia left a gift in her Will to help conquer Stroke

The first we knew of Sylvia was when we received notification of the gift she'd left us in her Will. Shortly after, a beautiful story of a much-loved woman began to unfurl.

Friends remembered Sylvia's kind-heart and her wish to help others. She spent part of her adult-life caring for her mother, and developed a passion for medicine. Becoming a medical secretary was her next step and, in the course of her career, she discovered the devastating impact a stroke could have on people and their families. She saw that research and treatment were vastly under-funded, and she decided to remember the Stroke Association in her Will.

Sylvia's gift has helped fund our work to conquer stroke. She's supported research to prevent and treat stroke, and she's helped care for survivors. And that's something you can do too – in the same way.

If you would like to learn more about remembering the Stroke Association in your Will, please get in touch.

Call 020 75661505 email legacy@stroke.org.uk
or visit stroke.org.uk/legacy

Stroke
association

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